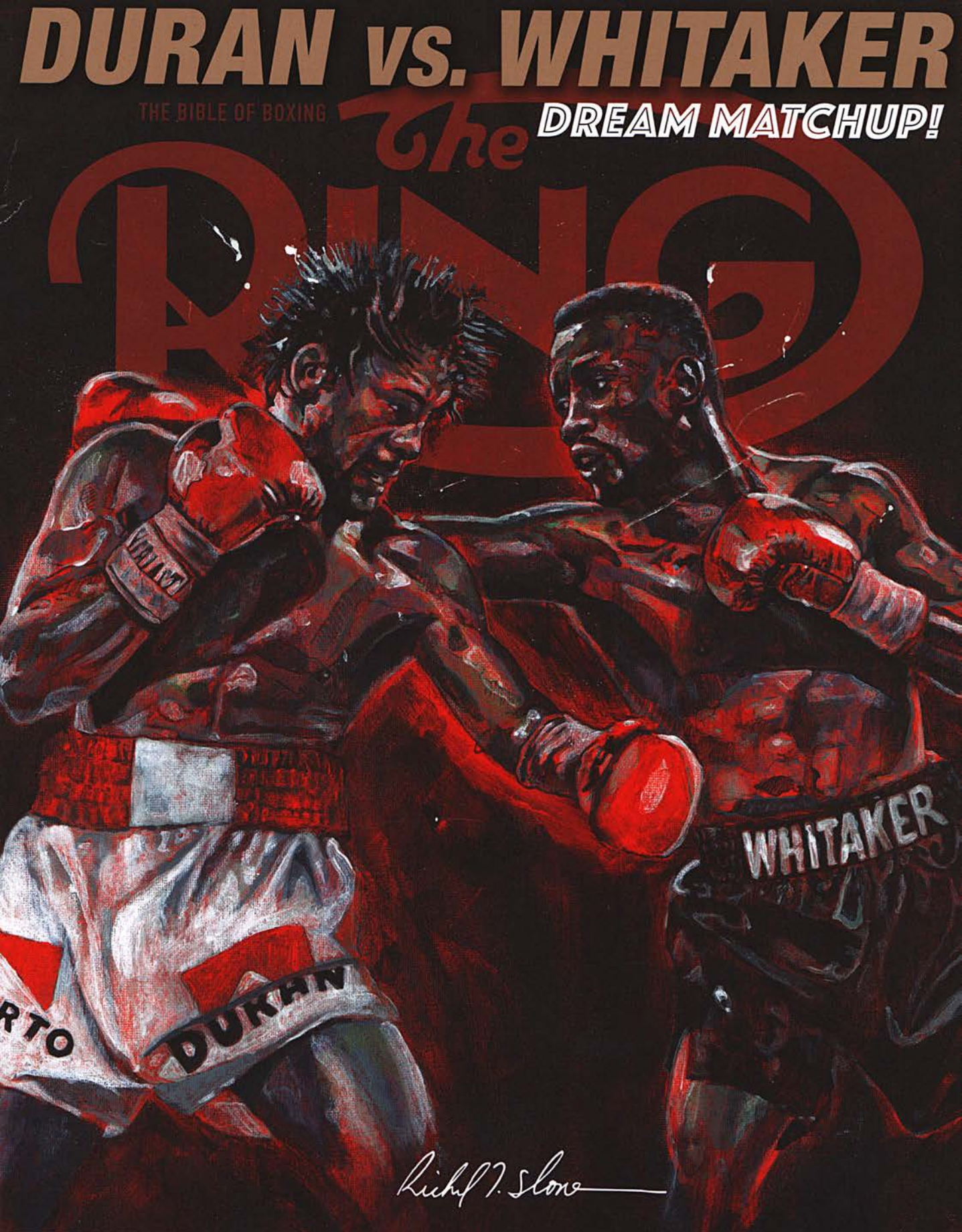
DURAN vs. WHITAKER

THE BIBLE OF BOXING

DREAM MATCHUP!

The RING



Richard T. Slone

DECEMBER 2021
$8.95
$8.95
12
0 72246 00396 1

+ DIVISION BY DIVISION:
THE GREATEST FIGHTERS OF ALL TIME

Hyper KO2

AVAILABLE NOW!

www.athleteps.com

26 THE PERFECT STORM
WHO WOULD WIN A FIRE VS. FINESSE MYTHICAL MATCHUP BETWEEN ROBERTO DURAN AND PERNELL WHITAKER?
By Ron Borges

32 BY THE NUMBERS
A STAT-BY-STAT BREAKDOWN OF DURAN VS. WHITAKER
By Lee Groves

38 GREATEST HITS: TIM BRADLEY
THE TWO-DIVISION TITLEHOLDER VANQUISHED FIGHTERS AND HATERS ALIKE
By Anson Wainwright

44 ROCKY VS. DRAGO
A NEW DIRECTOR'S CUT OF *ROCKY IV* REVISITS THE COLD WAR
By Tom Gray

48 THE 17 KINGS
RANKING THE TOP FIGHTERS OF ALL TIME BY MODERN WEIGHT DIVISIONS
By Anson Wainwright

62 FEVER DREAM
WHEN IKE IBEABUCHI'S TROUBLED MIND WAS SET ON A COMEBACK
By Luke G. Williams

66 BLONDE AMBITION
GUTS AND SAVVY HAVE PUT EBANIE BRIDGES ON A FAST TRACK
By Thomas Gerbasi

DEPARTMENTS

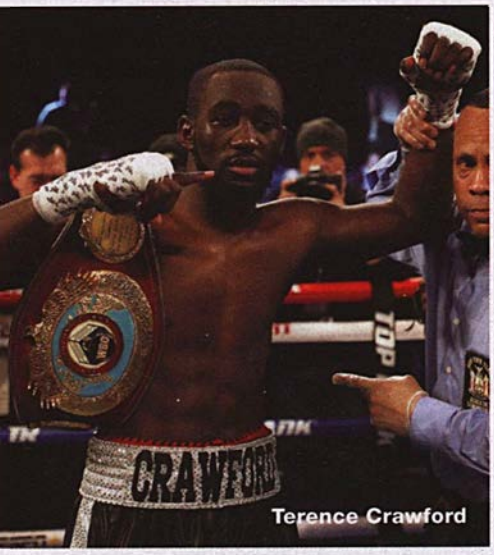
2 OPENING SHOT
4 COME OUT WRITING
7 RINGSIDE By Doug Fischer
10 FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
12 NEW FACES
14 JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES
By Thomas Hauser
18 THE FACE OF BOXING
By Wojtek Urbanek & Thomas Hauser
20 RING RATINGS PACKAGE
70 WORLD BEAT
78 FROM THE ARCHIVES
80 COMING UP

Duran-Whitaker would have been a classic style confrontation.

COVER PAINTING BY RICHARD T. SLONE

Some verbal sparring between Canelo Alvarez and Caleb Plant quickly got out of control at the kick-off press conference for their November 6 undisputed 168-pound title bout. Plant sustained a small cut under his left eye during the skirmish.

RONALD MARTINEZ



Terence Crawford

THE EYE TEST OF TIME

I read with interest your explanation of the pound-for-pound rating debate (Ratings Summary, October 2021) and how the "eye test" metric is generally weighed less than a fighter's resume. I completely agree with that thinking. With that being said, I'd like to understand how you have Terence Crawford ranked third. Clearly he passes the eye test, but I would argue that just about everyone else on the list has a stronger resume. In my opinion, if you are going on strength of resume, I don't see how Juan Francisco Estrada isn't ranked second with wins over Carlos Cuadras, Roman Gonzales, Srisaket Sor Rungvisai and Brian Viloria. Does that not compare favorably to an undersized Yuriorkis Gamboa and past-their-best Amir Khan and Kell Brook?

Randy Cook

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: We often get readers asking how Errol Spence Jr. can be ahead of Crawford in the welterweight ratings but behind him in the pound-for-pound list, and the answer to that question is similar: Crawford has been in the mythical rankings for a long time.

"Bud" made his debut at No. 10 in the August 2015 issue of The Ring. By the time the August 2016 issue rolled around, Floyd Mayweather Jr. (No. 1), Wladimir Klitschko (No. 2), Manny Pacquiao (No. 5), Carl Froch (No. 6) and Juan Manuel Marquez (No. 9) had all dropped out and Crawford was sitting at No. 6. Over the following year, Guillermo Rigondeaux (No. 5) slipped. By August 2018, Andre Ward (No. 1) and Roman Gonzalez (No. 4) were gone and Sergey Kovalev (No. 2) had plunged, leaving Crawford at No. 3, where he still sits today. Meanwhile, Spence didn't even get started in the pound-for-pound list until the January 2018 issue and Estrada didn't show up until August 2019, exactly four years after Crawford (keep in mind that the cover date on our magazine is different from when events actually happen). So Crawford gained a lot of ground by attrition, and while the level of his opposition hasn't been ideal lately, he also did nothing to harm his reputation as a pound-for-pound entrant in that period (plus we all know that his options for opponents have been limited by politics).

If Estrada's record consisted entirely of the wins you mentioned and Crawford's only victories were against the doomed Khan, Gamboa and Brook, then yes, Estrada would definitely be higher on the list. But all of the Mexican's triumphs except for Viloria happened after Crawford was already a pound-for-pounder, and Crawford was in that position for a reason: He was a titleholder at 140 pounds and had already been the Ring champion at lightweight. Before Estrada arrived, Crawford had also become the Ring champ at junior welterweight (where he unified all four major titles) and picked up a belt at 147. A pretty strong resume, even if the opponents' names don't jump off the page like they do for Estrada. Remember, a lot of those guys were undefeated until the day they met Bud, and he pretty much annihilated them. Maybe that strays into "eye test" territory, but it certainly was damned eye-catching.

GREATER THAN GREAT

I watched *The Kings* (the four-part Showtime documentary) and was reminded why Sugar Ray Leonard ranks above Floyd Mayweather Jr. as an all-time great.

Larry Merchant's intelligent words about "daring to be great" and "taking risks" bear reference. What separates Ray and Floyd is the fact that Ray dared to be great by taking risks against, in particular, a prime Roberto Duran in their first fight. Ray knew he risked losing going toe-to-toe.

In comparison, Floyd meticulously avoided Manny Pacquiao's prime and momentum, particularly from 2008 to 2011, when Manny was a huge risk. Floyd avoided Manny until 2015.

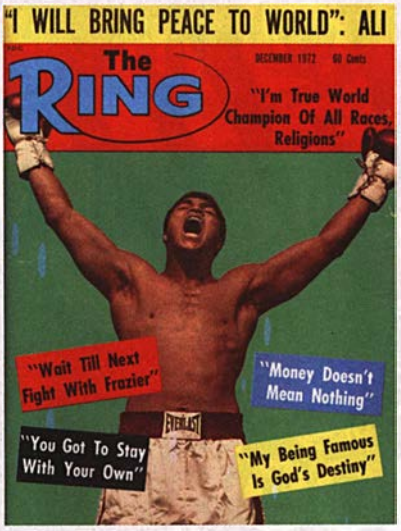
Guided by Al Haymon, Floyd copied Ray's marketing script and was fanatic about having every advantage and total control, which goes back to his time with Bob Arum. Thus, keeping total control, whilst protecting his 0, is part of the reason why Floyd ranks below Ray as an all-time great.

Lars Lundgaard
Denmark

NOT AS GREAT AS GREATEST

I have been following professional boxing and reading Ring Magazine since the early 1960s. After reading Mr. Jitahidi's letter (April 2021 issue) regarding Larry Holmes, I felt the need to add my opinion.

I do agree with Mr. Jitahidi's assessment of Larry Holmes being underrated.



However, contrary to popular opinion, I believe that Muhammad Ali's boxing career was somewhat overrated and I ask your readers to consider the following facts.

Ali came into the boxing scene when boxing was losing its popularity in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He was a great public relations man for boxing. His presence was huge and he did fill the boxing arenas. However, Ali's claim of being the "greatest of all time" has never had to answer one question: How can the "greatest of all time" lose to Leon Spinks in Spinks' eighth professional fight? Larry Holmes walked through Spinks in three rounds while Ali had to endure two 15-round fights with Spinks. Ken Norton was unheard of when he upset Ali in 1973, however George Foreman knocked out Norton in two rounds a year later. Archie Moore was a month shy of 50 years old when he fought Ali in 1962. Cleveland Williams was 33 years old, had a bullet lodged in his right hip, sustained nerve damage in his left leg above the knee and lost his right kidney when he fought Ali in 1966. Zora Folley was 36 years old and well past his prime when he fought Ali a year later. Ali battled George Chuvalo for 15 rounds in 1966 and then went another 12 rounds with him six years later. Joe Frazier dispatched Chuvalo in four rounds in 1967 and Foreman took out Chuvalo in three rounds in 1970. There is still a cloud of uncertainty over Ali's two fights with Sonny Liston. Ali endured a grueling 41 rounds with Joe Frazier in their three fights, but George Foreman knocked out Frazier in two rounds in 1973 and then repeated another knockout of Frazier in five rounds three years later.

If you review Ali's professional boxing record, you will find that he went the distance with many unknown or lower-tiered opponents during his career. Ali went 15 rounds with Mac Foster in 1972, 12 rounds with Rudi Lubbers in 1973 and 15 rounds with Alfredo Evangelista in 1977. All of these boxers, though rated in the top 10 or 15 heavyweights at the time, were not well-known. However, they were able to go to the final bell with Ali. Other lesser-known opponents were Jurgen Blin, Alvin Lewis, Jean Pierre Coopman and Richard Dunn. These fighters were virtually unknown to the average boxing fan prior to fighting Ali.

Therefore based on the above, Ali's boxing career was very similar to Marciano's except for the fact that Marciano was undefeated.

I do not want to besmirch Ali's life achievements and his fame. He was a true icon and a great spokesman for civil rights. However, boxing fans should not confuse his accomplishments outside the ring with his actual boxing career.

J. P. Sandy
Cincinnati, Ohio

CORRECTION: On page 47 of the November 2021 issue, a photo of Jose Luis Ramirez was mistakenly used in place of Victor Ramirez. We would've liked to include a photo of Victor here, but it turns out that images of him are very difficult to find, and even a search by the WBC was unsuccessful. In any case, we regret the mistake.

WRITE TO THE RING! Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 90254, Brooklyn, NY 11209 comeoutwriting@gmail.com
★ Emailed letters will include a writer's email address unless a city and state of origin are provided. Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

DI NARDO
TORINO
TAILOR CRAFTSMAN CREATOR OF THE GREATEST BOXING GLOVES IN THE WORLD. 100% HANDMADE IN ITALY
NOW AVAILABLE WORLDWIDE
INFO
PHONE: +393930012778
FILIPPO.DINARDO@PROTONMAIL.COM
NSAC CERTIFICATE
NYSAC CERTIFICATE
WBC CERTIFICATE
BBBofC CERTIFICATE
WWW.FILIPPODINARDO.COM - BOXING EQUIPMENT
WWW.DINARDOBOXING.COM - SPORTSWEAR

SCORECARDS

Boxing Aficionado™ X The RING 100 YEARS

MAIN EVENT

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

CO-MAIN EVENT

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

BOXINGAFICIONADO.COM

ALSO AVAILABLE AT RINGMAGSHOP.COM

EST 1922 The RING 100 YEARS

VOLUME 100, NO. 12 / **DECEMBER** 2021

FOUNDER
Nathaniel Fleischer (1888-1972)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Douglass Fischer

SENIOR EDITOR
Brian Harty

MANAGING EDITOR
Tom Gray

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Lamar Clark

CONTROLLER
Deborah L. Harrison

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Kenneth J. Gudaitis

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES
Advertising@sepublications.com
347-497-4297

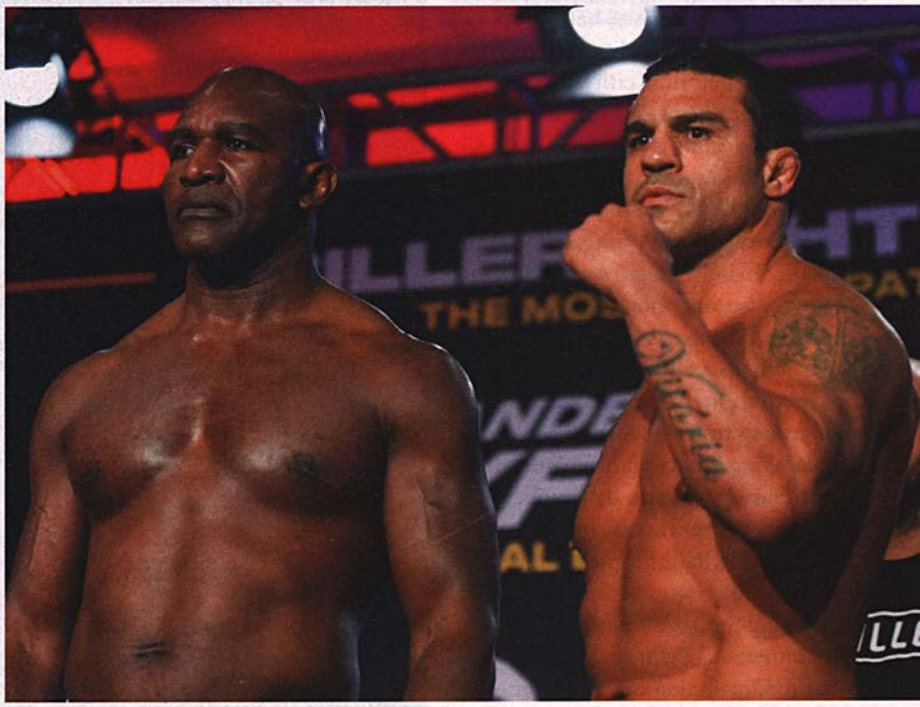
SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES
BACK ISSUES INQUIRIES
DIGITAL ORDERS INQUIRIES
The Ring Magazine
Subscriber Service Dept.
PO Box 16027
North Hollywood, CA 91615-6027
Phone: 818-286-3101
rngcs@magserv.com

SEND EDITORIAL COMMENTS TO:
comeoutwriting@gmail.com
or P.O. Box 90254
Brooklyn, NY 11209

THE RING (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 100, NO. 12 (DECEMBER 2021), is published 12 times per year by Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC, P.O. Box 90254 Brooklyn, NY 11209. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11209 and additional post offices. Postmasters: Send change of address notices to: The Ring Magazine Subscriber Service Dept., PO Box 16027, North Hollywood, CA 91615-6027, Phone: 818-286-3101; rngcs@magserv.com. Single copy price $8.95 in U.S.A. and Canada (£5.99 in the U.K.). Subscription price U.S. and possession $39.99 for 12 issues including Canada. Mexico add $5. All remaining countries add $10 for 12 issues per year. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage. The entire contents of this magazine are copyright ©2020 Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. Publisher is not responsible for the accuracy of the content of advertisements appearing in this magazine, nor the delivery or quality of merchandise or services offered. No endorsement of any such advertisement is intended or implied. Advertisers and agencies assume liability for claims arising from the content of their advertisements. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES: advertising@sepublications.com. U.S. / Canadian and International distribution by Comag Marketing Group LLC, 155 Village Blvd #200, Princeton, NJ 08540. UK distribution by Seymour Distribution Ltd., 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, England, EC1A 9PT. Printed In U.S.A.

RINGSIDE BY DOUG FISCHER

NOT A SEPTEMBER TO REMEMBER
(OR WE ALL NEED A LITTLE ESCAPISM FROM 2021)



Evander Holyfield's grim expression was a harbinger of things to come in his loss to Vitor Belfort.

So far, this has not been a year to remember – not fondly anyway.

Last year was a rough one due to the pandemic that still plagues the world, but 2021 had promise.

Tyson Fury, riding high and mighty following his Ring/WBC title-winning demolition of Deontay Wilder, appeared on his way to a showdown with unified beltholder Anthony Joshua for the undisputed heavyweight championship. Teofimo Lopez looked like the leader of a new generation of budding lightweight stars after he took the Ring crown from pound-for-pound player Vasiliy Lomachenko in his 16th pro bout, unifying three major sanctioning organization belts before his 24th birthday.

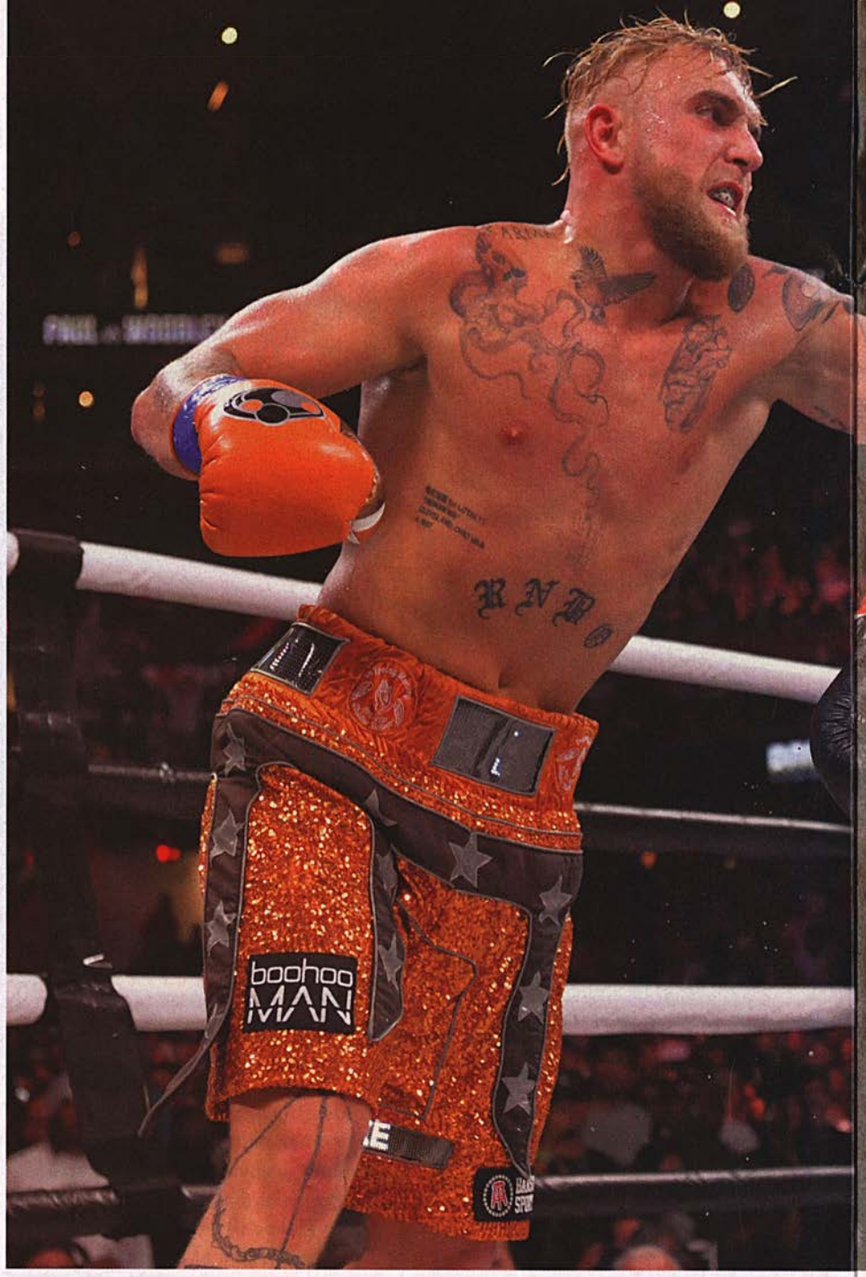
Hardcore fans were giddy with the possibility of Lopez engaging in a "Four Kings"-style round robin with fellow young guns Gervonta Davis, Ryan Garcia and Devin Haney.

None of that has happened.

As this magazine went to press, both Tyson and Lopez – The Ring's 2020 co-Fighters of the Year – had yet to fight in 2021. They're scheduled to fight in October – Tyson is contractually obligated to a third bout with Wilder and Lopez has IBF mandatory challenger George Kambosos to deal with – but the way this year has gone, nobody will believe it until they're actually in the ring with their opponents.

Fury-Wilder III was postponed from July to October 9 after Fury caught COVID-19 during his Las Vegas training camp, and I've lost track of the number of times Lopez-Kambosos has been pushed back and relocated. I'm guessing it's had five or six dates scheduled since upstart entertainment platform Triller won the IBF purse bid to promote the fight back in February. (Lopez getting COVID-19 was one of the more recent reasons it was postponed.)

This has been a year of cancellations, postponements and widespread inactivity.



Influencer matchups like Jake Paul vs. Tyron Woodley aren't doing boxing any favors.

Ryan Garcia, who graced the cover of the May 2021 issue following his gutsy stoppage of Luke Campbell in February, has yet to fight again. Several elite veterans are missing in action. Keith Thurman hasn't fought since he lost to Manny Pacquiao in July 2019. Gary Russell Jr. hasn't fought since last February. Gennadiy Golovkin hasn't fought since December.

OK, Russell's inactivity isn't new, but you get my point. It feels like nothing relevant is happening this year. What's stepped into the void of boxing entertainment has been polarizing to say the least. Apart from Manny Pacquiao vs. late-sub Yordenis Ugas, the only significant pay-per-view events this year have featured the Paul brothers in the main event.

Boxing purists aim as much discontent at Logan and Jake as they do the sanctioning organizations, but boxing has much bigger problems than bogus belts and a couple of social media savvy "content creators" trying their hands at prizefighting.

The first two weeks of September reminded the world just how desperate, disorganized, dangerous and unregulated professional boxing truly is.

Boxing's top stories from September 1-11 caused casual fans to shake their heads in disgust and took a toll on even the most upbeat aficionados: A teenager dies five days after she was knocked out in a mismatch. A respected world titleholder tests positive for a banned stimulant but is allowed to keep his belt and defend it. A 48-year-old retired boxing legend withdraws from a sanctioned boxing match with an MMA heavyweight, only to be replaced by a retired boxing legend who is 10 YEARS older.

Stomach-turning events made worse by the fact that they could have been avoided had boxing's power brokers and authorities followed the rules and done the right thing.

Jeanette Zacarias Zapata should not have died at age 18, because she shouldn't have been allowed to fight in Montreal.

The WBC should have stripped Oscar Valdez of their 130-pound title after a VADA test detected phentermine in his system, and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe Athletic Commission should not have allowed him to fight in Tucson, Arizona, on September 10.

Evander Holyfield should not have been blitzed and bewildered by Vitor Belfort, because the Florida State Boxing Commission should not have allowed the 58-year-old Hall of Famer to fight in Hollywood, Florida, on September 11.

If the sight of Holyfield stumbling around the ring against the swarming 44-year-old MMA striker caused longtime fans to throw the towel in on the sport they once loved, I can't really blame them.

Boxing commissions are failing to protect the fighters, while the industry seems to be going out of its way to sabotage itself.

But I can't quit boxing – not completely. I still love it even though I don't respect it as I once did. And being an amateur historian, I'll always have reverence for the sport's glorious past. Which brings me to this month's cover story, a dream-fight study of Roberto Duran vs. Pernell Whitaker, masterfully penned by veteran sportswriter Ron Borges, who canvassed an all-star lineup of boxing Hall of Famers on how that clash of great lightweights may have played out.

Fair and insightful analysis from Larry Merchant, Bruce Trampler, Freddie Roach, Al Bernstein and Teddy Atlas, among others, reminded me of the "Battle of the Legends" feature that ran in this magazine during the 1990s. The popular department paired up fighters (often from different eras) who never met in the ring and had a revolving trio of experts (boxers, trainers, writers, TV commentators, matchmakers, managers, promoters, etc.) break down the mythical matchups and pick a winner. I enjoyed reading about the imaginary fights (even when I disagreed with the experts). I also appreciated learning about great boxers from before my time as well as who was who in the boxing industry at the time via the panelists.

I hope you enjoy reading this month's cover story as much as I did. I relived the glory years of Whitaker's career that I witnessed as a young adult and I gained more respect for Duran's lightweight reign, which I missed during my early childhood.

Google "escapism" and you'll get this definition: "the tendency to seek distraction and relief from unpleasant realities … by seeking entertainment or engaging in fantasy."

Borges' article was like comfort food during a tough time.

Don't get me wrong, I don't want to run away from the "unpleasant realities" of early September. They were addressed in depth in several articles posted on RingTV.com, and they will be written about in the magazine too. The sad fact is these issues are recurring problems of a profoundly dysfunctional sport barely supported by a fractured regulatory system and a broken business structure.

Yet, I remain hopeful.

The Joshua-Oleksandr Usyk clash of Olympic gold medalists was one day away from a sellout stadium crowd in England when this magazine went to print.

Twitter was still buzzing about the Canelo Alvarez-Caleb Plant press conference scuffle as I wrote this column. Hopefully, the super middleweights keep that same energy when they vie for the undisputed championship on November 6.

And it looks like Terence Crawford will finally face a welterweight worthy of his skills and stature, fellow veteran Shawn Porter, on November 20.

Boxing's problems aren't going away anytime soon, but it will be a nice change of pace to "escape" into some real, quality fights.

JASON MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

BY TOM GRAY

Maxi Hughes made a mockery of the pre-fight odds to outclass Mexico's Jovanni Straffon.

MAXI HUGHES

There was an ominous atmosphere at ringside when lightweight Maxi Hughes climbed between the ropes at Headingley Stadium in Leeds, England.

The 31-year-old southpaw from Yorkshire had suffered five losses at the domestic level, and despite winning a British title in his most recent outing, he hadn't enjoyed what one would call a career-defining triumph.

With just five knockouts in 24 wins, Hughes simply didn't possess the firepower to discourage rampaging Mexican knockout artist Jovanni Straffon, who was coming off a first-round blowout of James Tennyson to secure a world rating and was being touted as a possible opponent for WBC titleholder Devin Haney.

Well, if ever a fight justified the complete omission of stats and reputation, this was it.

Hughes boxed beautifully from the opening bell, befuddling his hard-hitting foe with an accurate jab, adept movement and defensive savvy. Straffon, also a lefty, struggled to score with a significant punch and looked terribly frustrated after just three rounds of action.

In the fifth, Hughes exploited the low right hand of his opponent by landing a full-force left to the jaw. The punch had an immediate effect and the follow-up assault was brutal. The Englishman may not be regaled as a puncher, but he dished out so much punishment that ringsiders were astonished Straffon survived.

Hughes had imposed his boxing skills on the pre-fight favorite and he'd hurt him – he'd hurt him badly. There was no way back for Straffon, who was completely outclassed for the remainder of the fight and dropped a 12-round unanimous decision. The official scores reflected the one-sided nature of the contest: 120-107, 120-107 and 119-109.

In less than an hour, both fighters' careers had been completely switched around. Matchroom Boxing's Eddie Hearn, who had previously mentioned the real possibility of a Haney-Straffon bout, quickly switched tack and put Hughes forth as a prospective opponent for the unbeaten American. Hearn also signed Hughes to a multi-fight deal.

"Matchroom have provided so many opportunities for fighters, past and present, and to know those opportunities will be heading my way is all I could ask for," said Hughes.

"The victory wasn't a surprise, not to me anyway, given the preparation I'd put in and the time we had spent tailoring our approach to deal with someone like Straffon. But to win every round and to feel that comfortable feels pretty epic in front of a Yorkshire crowd."

TITLE BOXING

GEAR FOR EVERY GENERATION OF CHAMPIONS

@titleboxing /titleboxing /titleboxing @titleboxing

TITLEBOXING.COM

NEW FACES: JOEY SPENCER

By **Anson Wainwright**

AGE: 21
HOMETOWN: Linden, Michigan
WEIGHT CLASS: junior middleweight
HEIGHT/ REACH: 5-foot-9 (175 cm) / 70 inches (178 cm)
AMATEUR RECORD: 90-10
TURNED PRO: 2018
PRO RECORD: 13-0 (9 knockouts)
TRAINER: Jason Spencer
MANAGER: Al Haymon
PROMOTER: Premier Boxing Champions
INSTAGRAM: @JSNation_

BEST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: Spencer is most happy with his third-round knockout over Travis Gambardella (5-0-2 at the time) on the Errol Spence-Shawn Porter undercard in Los Angeles in September 2019.

"That was the first undefeated fighter I fought in my career," Spencer told The Ring. "I felt very good and sharp in that fight; I'm proud of that performance. It went a couple of rounds. I felt it was flawless, in my mind. I really like that one."

WORST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: Although Spencer got past Akeem Black in his eighth fight, it was a difficult night's work.

"I had some issues with the weight cut and the rehydration," explained Spencer, who won five rounds to one on all three scorecards. "I got sick the day of the fight. My body was in a rough place going into that fight.

"When I got into the fight, he was very tough – a lot tougher than I expected him to be. He really pushed me. I had some adversity to deal with; I was gassed out, I was exhausted, I wasn't feeling right. I was able to push through that fight, dig down deep and dog that fight out and win the decision.

"That's still a fight that pushes me, and I'm proud I was able to push through it. It's a valuable experience. I would never take that fight back."

WHY HE'S A PROSPECT: Spencer was a decorated amateur but turned pro while still a teenager.

"That was always our plan, not to leave it behind in the amateurs," he said. "We ended up getting invited into Virgil Hunter's gym when I was 16 years old. When I was in his gym, I was in pro camp after pro camp. I was learning more about turning pro from watching them and sparring professionals and watching Andre Ward camps. I learned more from that about being a pro than from amateur fighting."

During his time in Northern California, Spencer was able to get extra experience and high-class sparring with the likes of Peter Quillin, Erislandy Lara, Julian Williams, Amir Khan and Mario Barrios.

Williams remembers Spencer well and considers him to have considerable upside.

"[Spencer] is a really good kid. He has a lot of natural ability, great work ethic and really fast hands," said the former unified junior middleweight titleholder. "As long as he keeps progressing like he has been, he's gonna be a problem for anybody."

Renowned boxing trainer Joe Goossen, famed for his work with Michael Nunn and Gabriel and Rafael Ruelas, has worked the Fox Sports broadcast for several of Spencer's fights.

"What I saw in the beginning was a lot of raw material, but you could see all the talent that was there," said Goossen. "I think he's getting better and better, improving each and every fight, and that's a testament to him wanting to get better and through the osmosis of fighting.

"I saw much more intensity in the last few fights, in his desire to use every second of each round to his advantage. He's working the full three minutes. I'm seeing a better inside game than he had before. I see that he recognizes some defensive shortcomings that he's talked about, keeping his right hand to protect against the left hook. I see him addressing that, and that's one of the biggest keys to moving forward and improving."

WHY HE'S A SUSPECT: Goossen voiced his opinions on what Spencer needs to improve during the Fox telecasts and feels the young fighter and his team are doing their best to rectify those flaws.

"I've had minor discussions with Joey and his father about it," said the veteran trainer. "Between their eyes, reviewing films, other people's input – maybe my input had a little influence – I think they get it.

"He's going to have to be able to work on the inside more, shorten up his punches, make sure his one hand is up when the other hand is working. Be more intense, more fierce, look for knockouts when you get a guy you're hurting. [Knowing when] to step on the gas and take a guy like that out."

STORYLINES: Spencer was born and raised in a small suburban town in Michigan. He has an older sister and younger brother, Mickel, who is adopted but also boxes and is gearing up to turn professional.

When Spencer's father took up boxing in his 20s, the youngster was by his side.

"I wanted to be exactly like him and wanted to do what he was doing," Spencer said. "That's when it sparked. I was obsessed with it from an early age. I worked hard and sacrificed a lot growing up because this is what I've been doing my whole life."

Spencer says his boxing heroes are Miguel Cotto and Andre Ward, who stays in touch with his young protege.

"I was in the gym with a lot of fighters but nobody trained like [Andre]," said Spencer. "He was on a different level of focus, drive and determination, and I try to hold myself to that standard."

Spencer married his childhood sweetheart last year. He enjoys spending his off-time in the outdoors, hunting and fishing. He has a Dutch Shepherd named Cotto.

DRINK WITHOUT DROPPING YOUR GUARD.

Introducing Fraqua, the drinks bottle designed exclusively for big gloved sports

Fraqua.com

@fraquabottle @FraquaBottle @fraquabottle

Marv Albert covered a variety of sports for six decades, and his work within the sweet science is deeply respected.

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

MARV ALBERT AND BOXING

Marv Albert, who turned 80 this year, called what he says was the final game of his illustrious announcing career when the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Atlanta Hawks on June 27 to claim the NBA Eastern Conference title.

Albert is sportscasting royalty. He began his career in the 1960s as the radio voice of the New York Knicks and New York Rangers and is most identified in the public mind with the NBA. But in a journey spanning 58 years, he has called eight Super Bowls, seven Stanley Cup finals, two World Series, and Wimbledon. He was a craftsman who voluminously researched assignments and never just mailed it in.

He also had a droll sense of humor. In 1986, while interviewing St. Louis Cardinals manager Whitey Herzog (who was in competition with Yale president A. Bartlett Giamatti to become president of the National League), Marv suggested, "Whitey, look at it this way. If A. Bartlett Giamatti takes the job, there would be an opening for you at Yale University."

Herzog was not amused.

Steve Albert (the youngest of three Albert brothers) spent two decades as the blow-by-blow commentator for boxing on Showtime. Brother Al was behind the microphone for USA Tuesday Night Fights for 16 years. Marv has left his own imprint on the sweet science.

"When I was young," Marv recalls, "my dad took me to fights at a rickety arena in Coney Island. They weren't big fights, but they were exciting to me. And I remember going with him a couple of times to fights at St. Nicholas Arena. Then I started doing radio for the Knicks and Rangers and going to fights at The Garden."

Younger brother and Hall of Famer Steve Albert.

The most unique setting for a fight that Marv called as a blow-by-blow commentator was Rahway State Prison for the December 1, 1979, contest between James Scott and Yaqui Lopez. The bout was broadcast live on NBC. Scott was serving a prison term for armed robbery. Thus the venue. Ken Norton was paired with Marv as the expert commentator.

More often, NBC paired Albert with Ferdie Pacheco. Two fights from that collaboration stand out in Marv's mind. The first was John Tate's October 20, 1979, victory over Gerrie Coetzee in front of 86,000 spectators in South Africa to claim the WBA heavyweight title. "We had major security with us on that one," Marv recalls. "And there was the craziness of it all."

The second outing that stands out in Marv's mind was Larry Holmes' first-round obliteration of Marvis Frazier in 1983. Marvis wouldn't have been in the ring that night but for his father's name.

"I always liked Larry Holmes," Marv says. "I thought he was an underappreciated fighter and a good guy. And I liked Marvis. It was a sad situation."

Pacheco later said of his broadcasting partner, "Marv Albert was a pure star. He was motivated and driven by a desire to be perfect. Once he undertook a job, his employer could be sure Albert would devote 110 percent of his waking hours to be the best he could be, which was usually the best in the business."

Marv also called the May 20, 1985, heavyweight championship fight between Holmes and Carl Williams, which was the last heavyweight title fight broadcast live on network television in the United States until Deontay Wilder fought Johann Duhaupas for the WBC belt in 2015. And yes; Marv was behind the microphone for Wilder-Duhaupus, which was contested during a brief flirtation between NBC and Deontay's promoter, Premier Boxing Champions.

Marv also covered boxing for NBC at three Olympic Games: 1988 in Seoul, 1996 in Atlanta and 2000 in Sydney.

"The Roy Jones robbery was the

big story in 1988," Marv recalls. "And another thing I remember about those games was that they had two rings right next to each other with two fights going on at the same time. The bell rang in one ring, and a fighter in the other ring heard it and stopped fighting and got knocked out."

Teddy Atlas, who was paired with Marv at the 2000 Olympics, has his own remembrance of the man.

"Marv is an icon, but he's more than that," Atlas says. "He's a consummate professional, and to work with him was a real pleasure. I have my own standards and my own work ethic. And to see the work ethic he had after so many years was very impressive to me.

"I'll give you an example," Atlas continues. "We had trouble with the names of some of the fighters. Anyone would. We did the best we could. We had the names broken down for us phonetically before each fight. But one time during the action, I referred to one of the fighters as 'the Hungarian fighter in blue.' And the next break, Marv said to me, 'Teddy, you cannot do that.' And he was right. I was taking a shortcut. And if you're a pro, you don't take shortcuts."

"I enjoyed calling fights," Marv says, looking back on it all. "The scene, the stories, the characters in boxing were always intriguing to me."

So . . . is this a firm retirement. Or might sports fans see and hear Marv Albert behind a microphone again?

"It's firm," Marv answers. "I made up my mind. Fifty-five years of the NBA and all the other things I've done is enough. In a way, the pandemic was a rehearsal for retirement. I found myself reading more, working out more and doing other things to fill up my time. Unlike some boxers, I won't be coming back."

★★★

One of many problems that plague boxing today with regard to fighter safety is that medical standards differ widely – and wildly – from state to state. Some jurisdictions require state-of-the-art neuroimaging. Others require none at all. Some states require sophisticated eye examinations. In others, a fighter who's virtually blind in one eye can slide by. Medical records might be retained by commissions for future use, but they're rarely shared with other commissions.

Federal law now mandates the maintenance of electronic medical records for all healthcare providers. This brings the creation of a national medical database for fighters within easy reach.

The Association of Boxing Commissions should create a national medical database for fighters. State athletic commissions that take their responsibilities seriously could keep tabs on fighters through this database. States that do minimal testing (either because of a lack of expertise or lack of funding) could benefit through the efforts of their more thorough counterparts.

Dr. Nitin Sethi (chief medical officer for the New York State Athletic Commission) states, "A national medical database would streamline the process of reviewing medical records prior to a fight and go a long way toward protecting the health and safety of boxers. A boxer's medical history would be readily available at the click of a mouse, making it easier to identify high-risk fighters who need additional testing or closer medical supervision."

A national medical database would also reduce redundancy, such as repetitive and costly medical tests (for example, CT scans) and could be expanded to include all postfight medical care. Securing the database by limiting access to regulators with a legitimate need to know would ensure the confidentiality of the data provided.

The time is now.

Welterweight titleholder Errol Spence Jr. had surgery to repair a detached retina.

★★★

How good a boxing strategist is Freddie Roach?

After Paulie Malignaggi lost to Amir Khan in 2010, Paulie watched a tape of HBO's telecast of the fight and listened to the instructions that Roach gave to Khan between rounds.

"After the third or fourth round," Malignaggi recounted, "Freddie told Amir, 'I need you to feint. If you feint, he's going to drop down, and then you do this.' I'm saying to myself, 'Wow. That is my reaction to a feint. I never focused on it before, but that is how I respond.' Freddie knew me better than I knew myself."

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – Broken Dreams: Inside Another Year Inside Boxing – was just published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism. In 2019, he was selected for boxing's highest honor — induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

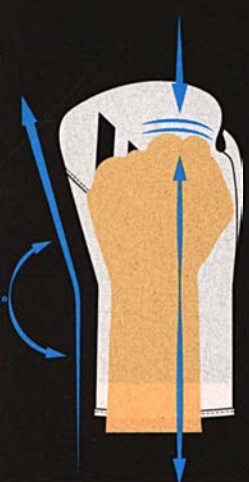
TILT 350

adidas

The first sustainable boxing gloves
Cactus Vegan Leather x Tilt Technology

JAMEL **HERRING** | MIGUEL **BERCHELT** | ANDERSON **SILVA** | ERIC **PRIEST**

Tilt Technology registered Worldwide



Discover the tilt technology and the first sustainable glove on

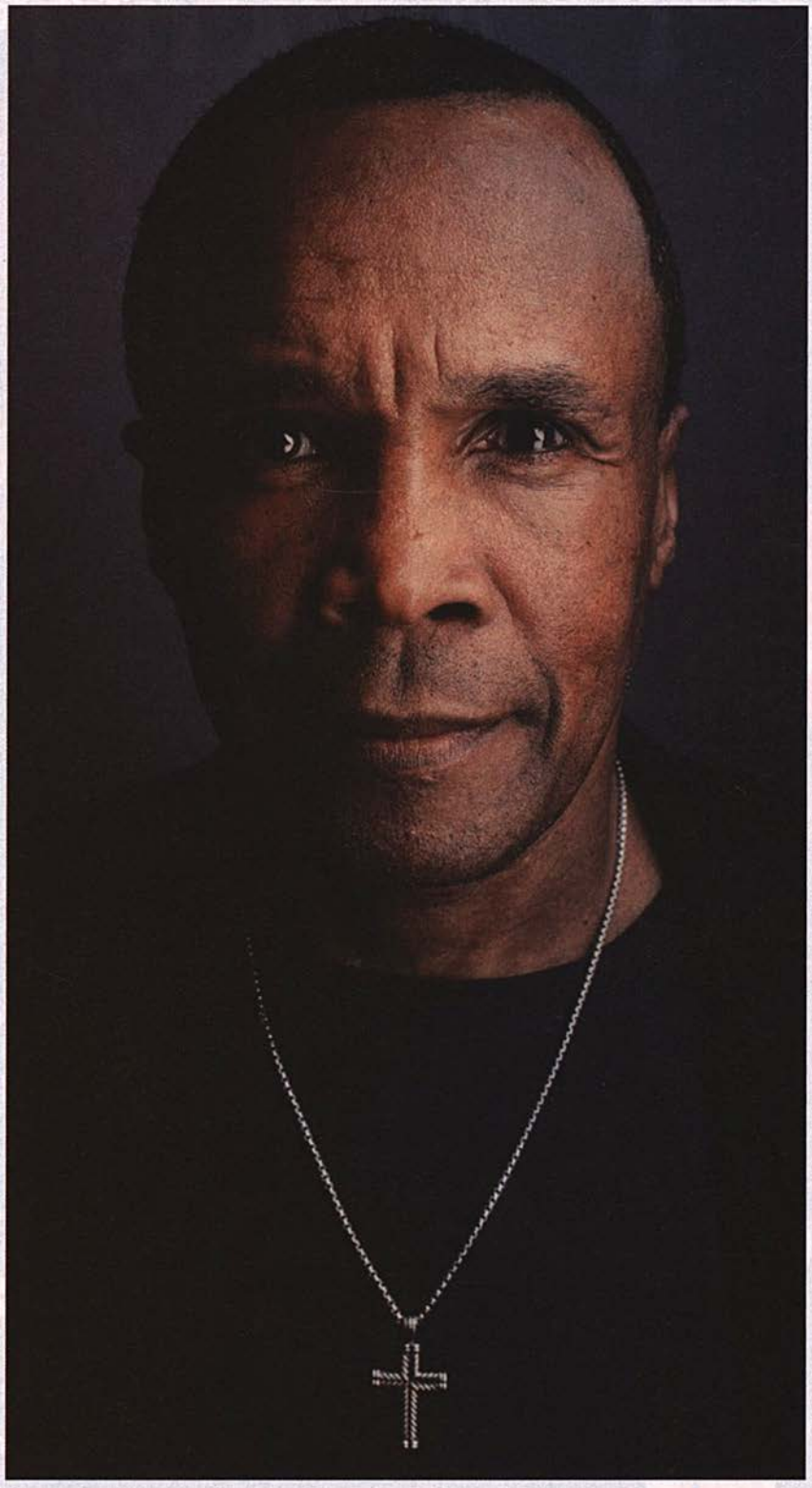
www.adidascombatsports.com

#SustainableBoxingGloves
#CactusLeather
#CombatForChange
#adidastiltgloves

THE INCOMPARABLE SUGAR RAY LEONARD

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WOJTEK URBANEK** • TEXT BY **THOMAS HAUSER**

THE FACE OF BOXING



Sugar Ray Leonard is boxing royalty. He burst upon the scene as a 20-year-old gold medalist at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. The only loss in the first 36 fights of his pro career was a one-point defeat at the hands of Roberto Duran. He rebounded from that defeat to beat Duran twice.

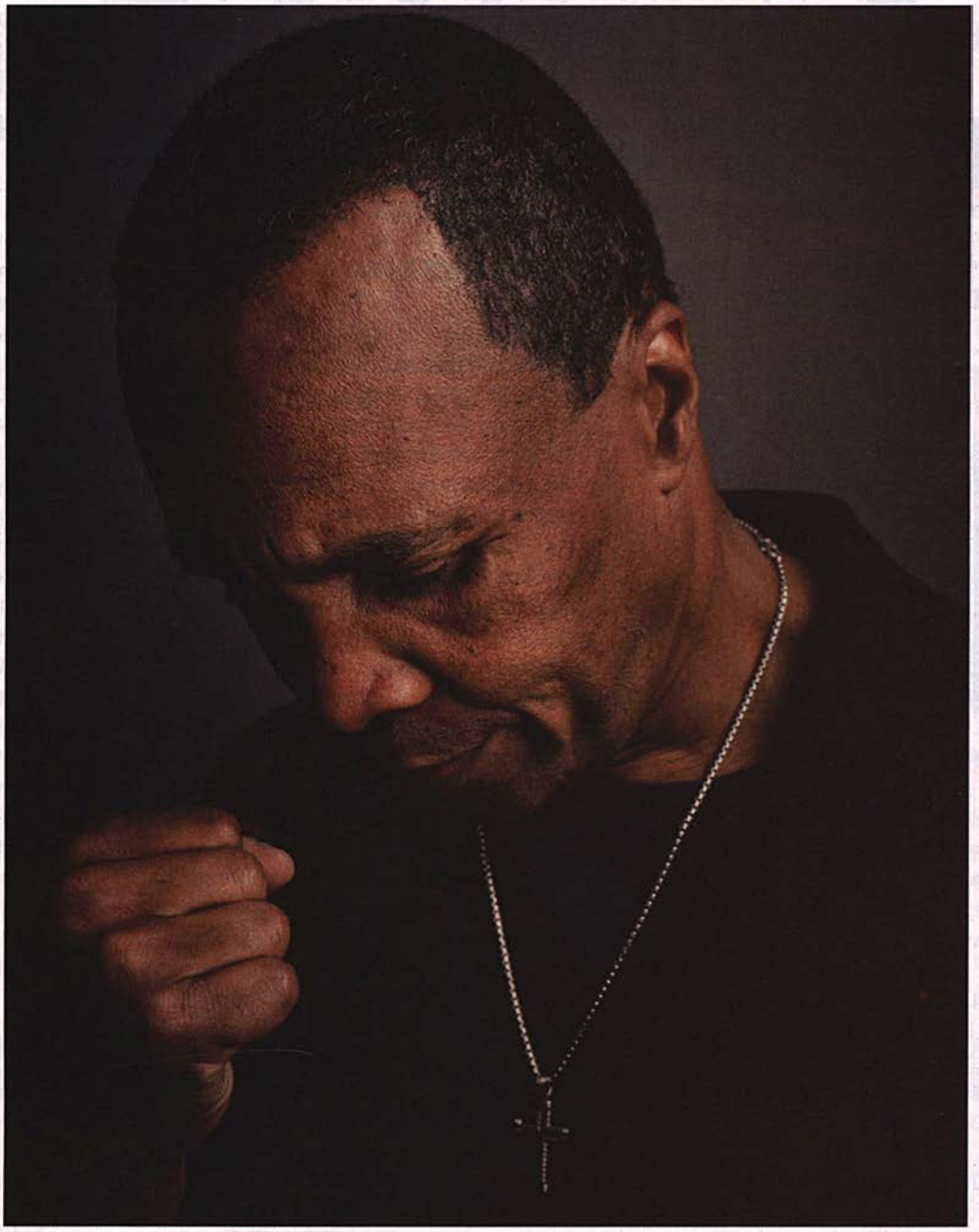
Leonard was a complete fighter. He could box. He could punch. He had hand speed. He could take a punch. He had heart. "And he was smart," trainer Don Turner noted. "Bill Russell smart. Ray did whatever he had to do to win. He won fights in so many different ways."

"People don't realize how tough Leonard was and how hard he hit," Duran said after their ring wars had come to an end. "I do because I fought him."

Leonard was a combatant in seven of the 12 fights contested amongst Marvin Hagler, Thomas Hearns, Roberto Duran, Wilfred Benitez and himself. These fights have a special place in boxing lore. His record in them was five wins, one loss and one draw.

Leonard-Hearns I was a time-capsule fight. Ray dug deep, fought through adversity, showed every quality that a fighter needs to be great and stopped Hearns in the 14th round. That night, he entered the ranks of boxing immortals.

"Ray Leonard was somebody I always dreamed about photographing," Wojtek Urbanek says.



"All photographers have lists like that in our mind. But the bar is so high that you don't think it will happen. These photographs were taken at a boxing writers dinner. I didn't even know that Ray would be there. I had just set up my equipment in a corridor off the main ballroom. Then I saw him coming toward me.

"Ray sat down in front of my camera," Urbanek remembers. "I took some photos. He was polite, and I didn't want to take up too much of his time. So after a while, I said thank you and that was that. Then he looked at some of the photos in my portfolio and said let's do some more. Before that, I was photographing the celebrity Ray Leonard and he was presenting himself in a certain way. Now he was trusting me and my camera, and everything came together perfectly.

"There's something special about boxers," Urbanek continues. "The history of human combat is in their eyes. The photograph of Ray with his fist is multilayered and can be interpreted in so many different ways. The cross accentuates the spiritual side of Ray. The fist is the fighter in him. Without the fist, it's a devotional portrait. Without the cross, it's the moments before battle. There was magic at work that night. The classical triangular composition of Ray's eye, his fist and the cross was a fortunate accident. Faith. Hope. Struggle. Reflection. They're all in this portrait. And it's Sugar Ray Leonard."

Wojtek Urbanek is based in New York and can be reached at studio@wojtekurbanek.com. Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com.

RATINGS

SUMMARY ★ ANALYSIS

The Ring Ratings through fights of Sept. 18, 2021

RECENT FIGHT RESULTS AND CHANGES IN THE RING'S DIVISIONAL RANKINGS BY BRIAN HARTY

Masternak vs. Nsue was a quick night for the veteran Pole.

CRUISERWEIGHT: As it turns out, six pro fights weren't enough to prepare Filipe Nsue for 49-fight veteran Mateusz Masternak (No. 9), who roughed up the rookie and squashed him with an overhand right in the third round. Nor was the eight-round stay-busy exercise enough to move Masternak in the ratings.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT: John Ryder (No. 6) also stayed busy with violent results, finishing off a blood-splattered Jozef Jurko (unrated) in the fifth frame of an Austrian eight-rounder.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT: Another wave of cuts due to pandemic inactivity claimed former unified titleholder Julian Williams (No. 5 last month), who dropped out and made room for unbeaten Spaniard Sergio Garcia at No. 10. However, by press time, Williams was slated to face Vladimir Hernandez (unrated) on October 9, so we'll likely be welcoming "J-Rock" back soon.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT: It's a really bad career omen when a No. 7-rated former titleholder gets knocked out by an underdog and the winner doesn't even get nominated to enter the top 10. The loser in this case was Ivan Baranchyk, who just three years ago was as safe as a 140-pound blender with no off-switch but has since had his reputation irrevocably damaged by losing three of his last four fights, two in a row by stoppage. The winner was Montana Love, a prospect from Ohio who was fighting in a 10-rounder for the first time but handily tamed Baranchyk's power and stopped him in the seventh round when the Belarusian's corner called it quits. Baranchyk was subsequently pulled from the ratings. Despite the breakthrough performance, one panelist described the result as "more about Baranchyk's decline than Love looking like a top 10 threat," and so Love was bypassed in favor of appointing 2016 Olympian Batyr Akhmedov at No. 10.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT: No. 1-rated Gervonta Davis, who most recently stopped Mario Barrios at 140, vacated his title, so everybody on the list got a promotion and undefeated Californian Xavier Martinez got No. 10. Oscar Valdez became the new leader of the pack.

The following week, Tevin Farmer (then No. 4) was dropped for inactivity, as his most recent bout was a loss to Joseph Diaz Jr. in January 2020. Everyone below him gained another notch and South African contender Azinga Fuzile came in at No. 10.

Throughout this time, a debate had been rumbling through the panel, but it wouldn't reach its conclusion until after September 10, when Valdez, now rated No. 1, won a unanimous decision over Robson Conceicao (unrated at the time) in Arizona. Up until that point, panelists were waiting to see if the fight actually went forward, since Valdez had tested positive (both A and B samples) for a banned stimulant called phentermine more than a week earlier. It indeed went forward, due to the tribal athletic commission's decision to use World Anti-Doping Agency guidelines (which do not ban phentermine out of competition) instead of the more-stringent rules of the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association, which administered the tests.

These rules have a way of suddenly getting more complicated when titleholders are involved, and such was the case with Valdez, who suffered no suspensions and was allowed to keep his WBC belt. One panelist immediately brought up a comparison: "This situation almost mirrors what happened with Luis Nery a few years ago. Nery tested positive on a VADA test shortly before defeating Shinsuke Yamanaka in 2017 and the WBC didn't strip him of the title that he won in that fight. The Ring did strip him and reinstated Yamanaka as champion."

The point swayed some in favor of dumping Valdez, but others were uncomfortable with the idea. One brought up the case of Dillian Whyte: "We didn't drop Whyte after he popped last time. I think we run the risk of playing judge and jury here, which I'm not sure is our role. If fighters are deemed in good standing by the powers that be in boxing, then I don't think we should be taking extrajudicial steps."

It should be said that the Whyte case involved other circumstances and yet another set of rules – those of U.K. Anti-Doping – but these two statements were good representations of the argument, with the crux being whether The Ring should take the step when others were not. Ultimately we decided to remove Valdez, which lifted Jamel Herring into the No. 1 spot. Conceicao, who gave a good account of himself against Valdez, took the space at No. 10.

For a more detailed explanation of the decision involving Valdez, you can go here: bit.ly/valdez-dropped

FEATHERWEIGHT: Probably the fighter with the highest profile yet to be dropped for inactivity was the man who was already known for it: Gary Russell Jr. The No. 1-rated 126-pounder had made it a tradition, starting in 2015, to fight only once per year, but his most recent was against Tugstsogt Nyambayar in February 2020, which is too long even for Russell. After his removal, WBO titleholder Emanuel Navarrete inherited the No. 1 spot and Joet Gonzalez, who was scheduled to face Navarrete on October 15, got No. 10.

In a truncated battle between Mauricio Lara and Josh Warrington (then Nos. 4 and 5 respectively), the storyline was just starting to blossom when a collision of skulls left a gash on Lara's face that forced a technical draw in the second round. Both gained a rank as a result of Russell's removal, however.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT: WBO titleholder Kazuto Ioka (No. 3) overcame a legit challenge in Francisco Rodriguez Jr. (No. 7), canceling out the Mexican's early rush with his own surge down the stretch to earn a unanimous decision. It was a solid accomplishment for Ioka, who has held titles in all four of the lightest divisions and also resides at No. 10 on the pound-for-pound list, but unfortunately at 115 he is pinned below the holy trinity of Juan Francisco Estrada, Srisaket Sor Rungvisai and Roman Gonzalez and can't rise at this time (there was a suggestion that he get a P4P promotion, but it didn't fly). Rodriguez slipped a rank but then immediately got it back when Khalid Yafai (No. 6) was removed for inactivity – a change that also created a vacancy at No. 10 for Pedro Guevara.

FLYWEIGHT: If you'd like to see a nose break in slow motion, head over to Top Rank's YouTube channel and watch Junto Nakatani do the deed on Angel Acosta's schnoz while defending his WBO belt on the Valdez-Conceicao undercard. Nakatani was in control regardless, but the injury and all the blood it begat eventually required referee Rocky Burke to end the fight in Round 4. The performance impressed one panelist enough to declare that the Japanese road warrior may be the best flyweight in the world, and his status improved from No. 4 to No. 2. Acosta, formerly No. 8, was dropped from the list and Ryota Yamauchi came in at No. 10.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT: Sho Kimura (No. 5 last month) was another victim of lost time, having not fought since a stoppage of Merlito Sabillo in February 2020, and his removal made room for countryman Masamichi Yabuki at No. 10. RING

P4P

1. **CANELO ALVAREZ** — Mexico • 56-1-2 (38 KOs)
2. **NAOYA INOUE** — Japan • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)
3. **TERENCE CRAWFORD** — U.S. • 37-0-0 (28 KOs)
4. **OLEKSANDR USYK** — Ukraine • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
5. **JOSH TAYLOR** — U.K. • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
6. **ERROL SPENCE JR.** — U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)
7. **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** — U.S. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
8. **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** — Mexico • 42-3-0 (28 KOs)
9. **VASILIY LOMACHENKO** — Ukraine • 15-2-0 (11 KOs)
10. **KAZUTO IOKA** — Japan • 27-2-0 (15 KOs)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

- C **TYSON FURY** RING, WBC — U.K. • 30-0-1 (21 KOs)
- 1 **ANTHONY JOSHUA** IBF, WBA, WBO — U.K. • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)
- 2 **DEONTAY WILDER** — U.S. • 42-1-1 (41 KOs)
- 3 **DILLIAN WHYTE** — U.K. • 28-2-0 (19 KOs)
- 4 **JOSEPH PARKER** — New Zealand • 29-2-0 (21 KOs)
- 5 **ANDY RUIZ JR.** — U.S. • 34-2-0 (22 KOs)
- 6 **LUIS ORTIZ** — Cuba • 32-2-0 (27 KOs)
- 7 **MICHAEL HUNTER** — U.S. • 20-1-1 (14 KOs)
- 8 **OSCAR RIVAS** — Colombia • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
- 9 **JOE JOYCE** — U.K. • 13-0-0 (12 KOs)
- 10 **OLEKSANDR USYK** — Ukraine • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

- C **MAIRIS BRIEDIS** RING, IBF — Latvia • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
- 1 **YUNIEL DORTICOS** — Cuba • 24-2-0 (22 KOs)
- 2 **ILUNGA MAKABU** WBC — Congo • 28-2-0 (25 KOs)
- 3 **LAWRENCE OKOLIE** WBO — U.K. • 16-0-0 (13 KOs)
- 4 **THABISO MCHUNU** — S. Africa • 23-5-0 (13 KOs)
- 5 **KEVIN LERENA** — S. Africa • 26-1-0 (13 KOs)
- 6 **KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI** — Poland • 31-3-0 (19 KOs)
- 7 **ALEKSEI PAPIN** — Russia • 13-1-0 (12 KOs)
- 8 **MICHAL CIESLAK** — Poland • 21-1-0 (15 KOs)
- 9 **MATEUSZ MASTERNAK** — Poland • 45-5-0 (30 KOs)
- 10 **RYAD MERHY** — Belgium • 30-1-0 (25 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

- C **(VACANT)**
- 1 **ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC — Russia • 16-0-0 (16 KOs)
- 2 **DMITRY BIVOL** WBA — Russia • 18-0-0 (11 KOs)
- 3 **JOE SMITH JR.** — U.S. • 27-3-0 (21 KOs)
- 4 **BADOU JACK** — Sweden • 24-3-3 (14 KOs)
- 5 **ELEIDER ALVAREZ** — Colombia • 25-2-0 (13 KOs)
- 6 **MARCUS BROWNE** — U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
- 7 **MAXIM VLASOV** — Russia • 45-4-0 (26 KOs)
- 8 **LYNDON ARTHUR** — U.K. • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)
- 9 **GILBERTO RAMIREZ** — Mexico • 42-0-0 (28 KOs)
- 10 **JOSHUA BUATSI** — U.K. • 15-0-0 (13 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

- C **CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, WBA, WBC, WBO — Mexico • 56-1-2 (38 KOs)
- 1 **DAVID BENAVIDEZ** — U.S. • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)
- 2 **CALEB PLANT** IBF — U.S. • 21-0-0 (12 KOs)
- 3 **CALLUM SMITH** — U.K. • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
- 4 **BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** — U.K. • 30-1-0 (14 KOs)
- 5 **ANTHONY DIRRELL** — U.S. • 33-2-2 (24 KOs)
- 6 **JOHN RYDER** — U.K. • 30-5-0 (17 KOs)
- 7 **DAVID LEMIEUX** — Canada • 43-4-0 (36 KOs)
- 8 **DANIEL JACOBS** — U.S. • 37-3-0 (30 KOs)
- 9 **FEDOR CHUDINOV** — Russia • 24-2-1 (16 KOs)
- 10 **CARLOS GONGORA** — Ecuador • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of Sept. 18, 2021

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

C (VACANT)

1 GENNADIY GOLOVKIN IBF
Kazakhstan • 41-1-1 (36 KOs)

2 JERMALL CHARLO WBC
U.S. • 32-0-0 (22 KOs)

3 DEMETRIUS ANDRADE WBO
U.S. • 30-0-0 (18 KOs)

4 SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO
Ukraine • 13-3-0 (10 KOs)

5 RYOTA MURATA WBA
Japan • 16-2-0 (13 KOs)

6 JAIME MUNGUIA
Mexico • 37-0-0 (30 KOs)

7 ZHANIBEK ALIMKHANULY
Kazakhstan • 10-0-0 (6 KOs)

8 CHRIS EUBANK JR.
U.K. • 30-2-0 (22 KOs)

9 LIAM WILLIAMS
U.K. • 23-3-1 (18 KOs)

10 FELIX CASH
U.K. • 14-0-0 (10 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

C JERMELL CHARLO RING, WBC, IBF, WBA
U.S. • 34-1-1 (18 KOs)

1 BRIAN CASTANO WBO
Argentina • 17-0-2 (12 KOs)

2 JARRETT HURD
U.S. • 24-2-0 (16 KOs)

3 ERISLANDY LARA
Cuba • 28-3-3 (16 KOs)

4 ERICKSON LUBIN
U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)

5 TONY HARRISON
U.S. • 28-3-1 (21 KOs)

6 TIM TSZYU
Australia • 19-0-0 (15 KOs)

7 SEBASTIAN FUNDORA
U.S. • 17-0-1 (12 KOs)

8 MAGOMED KURBANOV
Russia • 22-0-0 (13 KOs)

9 CARLOS ADAMES
Dom. Rep. • 20-1-0 (16 KOs)

10 SERGIO GARCIA
Spain • 33-0-0 (14 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

C (VACANT)

1 ERROL SPENCE JR. IBF, WBC
U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)

2 TERENCE CRAWFORD WBO
U.S. • 37-0-0 (28 KOs)

3 YORDENIS UGAS WBA
Cuba • 27-4-0 (12 KOs)

4 SHAWN PORTER
U.S. • 31-3-1 (17 KOs)

5 MANNY PACQUIAO
Phil. • 62-8-2 (39 KOs)

6 VERGIL ORTIZ JR.
U.S. • 18-0-0 (18 KOs)

7 DANNY GARCIA
U.S. • 36-3-0 (21 KOs)

8 JARON ENNIS
U.S. • 27-0-0 (25 KOs)

9 KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV
Uzbekistan • 18-0-0 (10 KOs)

10 EIMANTAS STANIONIS
Lithuania • 13-0-0 (9 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

C JOSH TAYLOR RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.K. • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)

1 REGIS PROGRAIS
U.S. • 26-1-0 (22 KOs)

2 JOSE RAMIREZ
U.S. • 26-1-0 (17 KOs)

3 JOSE ZEPEDA
U.S. • 34-2-0 (26 KOs)

4 VIKTOR POSTOL
Ukraine • 31-3-0 (12 KOs)

5 ARNOLD BARBOZA
U.S. • 26-0-0 (10 KOs)

6 GERVONTA DAVIS
U.S. • 25-0-0 (24 KOs)

7 SUBRIEL MATIAS
Puerto Rico • 17-1-0 (17 KOs)

8 MARIO BARRIOS
U.S. • 26-1-0 (17 KOs)

9 SHOHJAHON ERGASHEV
Uzbekistan • 20-0-0 (18 KOs)

10 BATYR AKHMEDOV
Russia • 9-1-0 (8 KOs)

Oscar Valdez was removed at 130 following two positive VADA tests. His opponent, Robson Conceicao (right), enters the ratings at No. 10.

Mauricio Lara and Josh Warrington retained their respective positions at 126 pounds following a technical draw.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

C TEOFIMO LOPEZ RING, WBA, WBO, IBF
U.S. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)

1 VASILIY LOMACHENKO
Ukraine • 15-2-0 (11 KOs)

2 RYAN GARCIA
U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)

3 DEVIN HANEY WBC
U.S. • 26-0-0 (15 KOs)

4 RICHARD COMMEY
Ghana • 30-3-0 (27 KOs)

5 JOSEPH DIAZ JR.
U.S. • 32-1-1 (15 KOs)

6 JORGE LINARES
Venezuela • 47-6-0 (29 KOs)

7 JAVIER FORTUNA
Dom. Rep. • 36-3-1 (25 KOs)

8 GEORGE KAMBOSOS JR.
Australia • 19-0-0 (10 KOs)

9 ISAAC CRUZ
Mexico • 22-1-1 (15 KOs)

10 WILLIAM ZEPEDA
Mexico • 23-0-0 (21 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

C (VACANT)

1 JAMEL HERRING WBO
U.S. • 23-2-0 (11 KOs)

2 MIGUEL BERCHELT
Mexico • 38-2-0 (34 KOs)

3 SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV
Russia • 15-0-1 (12 KOs)

4 CHRIS COLBERT
U.S. • 16-0-0 (6 KOs)

5 SHAKUR STEVENSON
U.S. • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)

6 ROGER GUTIERREZ
Venezuela • 26-3-1 (20 KOs)

7 O'SHAQUIE FOSTER
U.S. • 18-2-0 (11 KOs)

8 XAVIER MARTINEZ
U.S. • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

9 AZINGA FUZILE
South Africa • 15-1-0 (9 KOs)

10 ROBSON CONCEICAO
Brazil • 16-1-0 (8 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

C (VACANT)

1 EMANUEL NAVARRETE WBO
Mexico • 33-1-0 (28 KOs)

2 KID GALAHAD IBF
U.K. • 28-1-0 (17 KOs)

3 MAURICIO LARA
Mexico • 23-2-1 (16 KOs)

4 JOSH WARRINGTON
U.K. • 30-1-1 (7 KOs)

5 MARK MAGSAYO
Phil. • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)

6 LEIGH WOOD
U.K. • 25-2-0 (15 KOs)

7 TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR
Mongolia • 12-2-0 (9 KOs)

8 XU CAN
China • 18-3-0 (3 KOs)

9 JESSIE MAGDALENO
U.S. • 28-1-0 (18 KOs)

10 JOET GONZALEZ
U.S. • 24-1-0 (14 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

C (VACANT)

1 MURODJON AKHMADALIEV IBF, WBA
Uzbekistan • 9-0-0 (7 KOs)

2 DANIEL ROMAN
U.S. • 29-3-1 (10 KOs)

3 STEPHEN FULTON WBO
U.S. • 19-0-0 (8 KOs)

4 BRANDON FIGUEROA WBC
U.S. • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)

5 ANGELO LEO
U.S. • 21-1-0 (9 KOs)

6 HIROAKI TESHIGAWARA
Japan • 22-2-2 (15 KOs)

7 RAEESE ALEEM
U.S. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)

8 AZAT HOVHANNISYAN
Armenia • 20-3-0 (16 KOs)

9 RONNY RIOS
U.S. • 33-3-0 (16 KOs)

10 RYOSUKE IWASA
Japan • 27-4-0 (17 KOs)

GET 6 ISSUES FOR $24.99

3 ISSUES FREE

SPECIAL DISCOUNT
PROMO CODE: 6301NC

NAME

ADDRESS / APT

CITY / STATE / ZIP

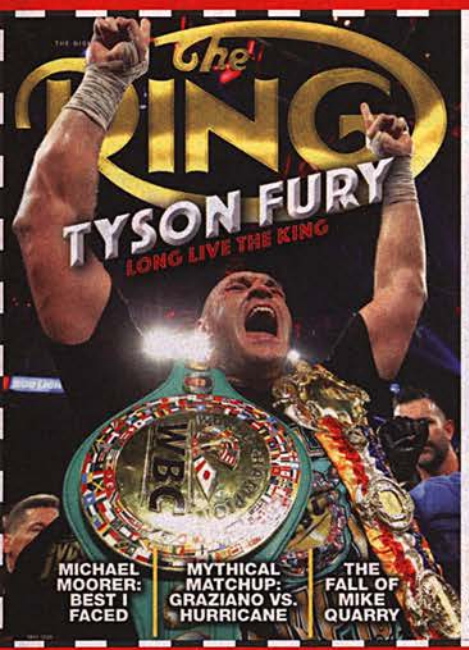
EMAIL TELEPHONE

PAYMENT METHOD: ☐CHECK / MONEY ORDER ☐VISA ☐MASTERCARD ☐AMEX

CARD # / EXP. DATE 3 OR 4 DIGIT SECURITY CODE SIGNATURE

MAIL TO: SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICATIONS LLC, P.O. BOX 433122, PALM COAST, FL 32164-3122
OR CALL: 1.800.846.6438 **OR EMAIL:** thering@emailcustomerservice.com

*FOR CANADA AND MEXICO: $29.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $49.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $79.99 FOR TWO YEARS. ALL OTHER COUNTRIES: $34.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $59.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $99.99 FOR TWO YEARS. INTERNATIONAL MONEY ORDERS ONLY IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. AIRMAIL SHIPPING ONLY OUTSIDE THE U.S. PLEASE ALLOW UP TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE YOU RECEIVE YOUR FIRST MAGAZINE. OFFER EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 20120



GET 12 ISSUES FOR $39.99

7 ISSUES FREE

SPECIAL DISCOUNT
PROMO CODE: 6301NC

NAME

ADDRESS / APT

CITY / STATE / ZIP

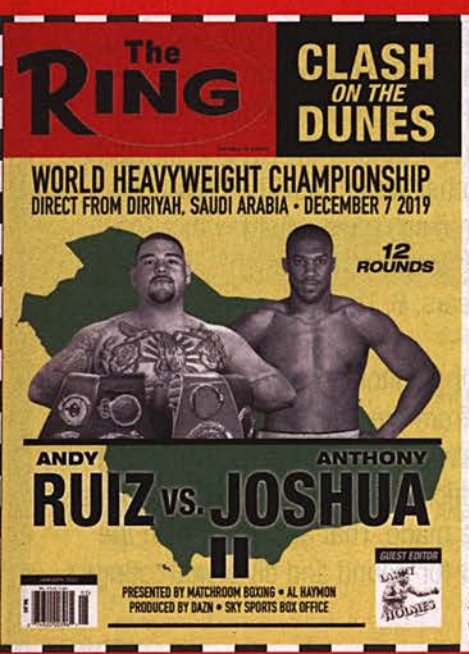
EMAIL TELEPHONE

PAYMENT METHOD: ☐CHECK / MONEY ORDER ☐VISA ☐MASTERCARD ☐AMEX

CARD # / EXP. DATE 3 OR 4 DIGIT SECURITY CODE SIGNATURE

MAIL TO: SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICATIONS LLC, P.O. BOX 433122, PALM COAST, FL 32164-3122
OR CALL: 1.800.846.6438 **OR EMAIL:** thering@emailcustomerservice.com

*FOR CANADA AND MEXICO: $29.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $49.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $79.99 FOR TWO YEARS. ALL OTHER COUNTRIES: $34.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $59.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $99.99 FOR TWO YEARS. INTERNATIONAL MONEY ORDERS ONLY IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. AIRMAIL SHIPPING ONLY OUTSIDE THE U.S. PLEASE ALLOW UP TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE YOU RECEIVE YOUR FIRST MAGAZINE. OFFER EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 2020



GET 24 ISSUES FOR $64.99

16 ISSUES FREE

SPECIAL DISCOUNT
PROMO CODE: 6301NC

NAME

ADDRESS / APT

CITY / STATE / ZIP

EMAIL TELEPHONE

PAYMENT METHOD: ☐CHECK / MONEY ORDER ☐VISA ☐MASTERCARD ☐AMEX

CARD # / EXP. DATE 3 OR 4 DIGIT SECURITY CODE SIGNATURE

MAIL TO: SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICATIONS LLC, P.O. BOX 433122, PALM COAST, FL 32164-3122
OR CALL: 1.800.846.6438 **OR EMAIL:** thering@emailcustomerservice.com

*FOR CANADA AND MEXICO: $29.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $49.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $79.99 FOR TWO YEARS. ALL OTHER COUNTRIES: $34.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $59.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $99.99 FOR TWO YEARS. INTERNATIONAL MONEY ORDERS ONLY IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. AIRMAIL SHIPPING ONLY OUTSIDE THE U.S. PLEASE ALLOW UP TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE YOU RECEIVE YOUR FIRST MAGAZINE. OFFER EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 2020

RATINGS

Through fights of Sept. 18, 2021

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **NAOYA INOUE** RING, IBF, WBA
  Japan • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **1** **NONITO DONAIRE** WBC
  Phil. • 41-6-0 (27 KOs)
- **2** **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** WBO
  Philippines • 31-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **3** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  Puerto Rico • 19-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **NORDINE OUBAALI**
  France • 17-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 22-2-0 (18 KOs)
- **6** **TAKUMA INOUE**
  Japan • 14-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **7** **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
  Cuba • 20-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **8** **RAU'SHEE WARREN**
  U.S. • 19-3-0 (5 KOs)
- **9** **GARY ANTONIO RUSSELL**
  U.S. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **LEE MCGREGOR**
  U.K. • 11-0-0 (9 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBA, WBC
  Mexico • 42-3-0 (28 KOs)
- **1** **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 50-5-1 (43 KOs)
- **2** **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
  Nicaragua • 50-3-0 (41 KOs)
- **3** **KAZUTO IOKA** WBO
  Japan • 27-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **4** **JERWIN ANCAJAS** IBF
  Phil. • 33-1-2 (22 KOs)
- **5** **JOSHUA FRANCO**
  U.S. • 18-1-2 (8 KOs)
- **6** **CARLOS CUADRAS**
  Mexico • 39-4-1 (27 KOs)
- **7** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 34-5-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **DONNIE NIETES**
  Philippines • 43-1-5 (23 KOs)
- **9** **ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **10** **PEDRO GUEVARA**
  Mexico • 37-3-1 (22 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 18-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **2** **JUNTO NAKATANI** WBO
  Japan • 22-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **3** **SUNNY EDWARDS** IBF
  U.K. • 16-0-0 (4 KOs)
- **4** **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA
  Ukraine • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **5** **MORUTI MTHALANE**
  S. Africa • 39-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **6** **RICARDO SANDOVAL**
  U.S. • 19-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **7** **CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 31-5-0 (21 KOs)
- **8** **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
  Puerto Rico • 21-4-0 (16 KOs)
- **9** **JACKSON CHAUKE**
  S. Africa • 20-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **10** **RYOTA YAMAUCHI**
  Japan • 8-1-0 (7 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** RING, WBA
  Japan • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **1** **KENSHIRO TERAJI** WBC
  Japan • 18-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **FELIX ALVARADO** IBF
  Nicaragua • 37-2-0 (32 KOs)
- **3** **ELWIN SOTO** WBO
  Mexico • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 33-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **AGUSTIN GAUTO**
  Argentina • 16-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **6** **JESSE RODRIGUEZ**
  U.S. • 13-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **7** **ESTEBAN BERMUDEZ**
  Mexico • 14-3-2 (10 KOs)
- **8** **DANIEL MATELLON**
  Cuba • 12-0-2 (6 KOs)
- **9** **SIVENATHI NONTSHINGA**
  S. Africa • 10-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **10** **MASAMICHI YABUKI**
  Japan • 12-3-0 (11 KOs)

Kazuto Ioka, No. 3 at 115 pounds, prevailed against No. 7-rated Francisco Rodriguez Jr.

John Ryder (R) halted Slovakia's Jozef Jurko in the fifth round of a six-rounder

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA
  Thailand • 21-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2** **PETCHMANEE CP FRESHMART** WBC
  Thailand • 36-1-0 (23 KOs)
- **3** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
  Thailand • 54-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **4** **WILFREDO MENDEZ** WBO
  Puerto Rico • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **5** **VIC SALUDAR**
  Phil. • 21-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **6** **RENE MARK CUARTO** IBF
  Phil. • 19-2-2 (11 KOs)
- **7** **PEDRO TADURAN**
  Phil. • 14-3-1 (11 KOs)
- **8** **MASATAKA TANIGUCHI**
  Japan • 14-3-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **GINJIRO SHIGEOKA**
  Japan • 6-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **MELVIN JERUSALEM**
  Philippines • 17-2-0 (10 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED
RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

WOMEN'S RATINGS

Through fights of Sept. 18, 2021

POUND FOR POUND

1 **KATIE TAYLOR**
Ireland • 19-0-0 (6 KOs)

2 **CLARESSA SHIELDS**
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)

3 **AMANDA SERRANO**
Puerto Rico • 41-1-1 (30 KOs)

4 **JESSICA MCCASKILL**
U.S. • 10-2-0 (3 KOs)

5 **DELFINE PERSOON**
Belgium • 45-3-0 (18 KOs)

6 **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
Norway • 36-2-0 (9 KOs)

7 **MIKAELA MAYER**
U.S. • 15-0-0 (5 KOs)

8 **CHANTELLE CAMERON**
U.K. • 14-0-0 (8 KOs)

9 **SENIESA ESTRADA**
U.S. • 21-0-0 (8 KOs)

10 **SAVANNAH MARSHALL**
U.K. • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **ELIN CEDERROOS** IBF, WBA
Sweden • 8-0-0 (4 KOs)
2 **FRANCHON CREWS-DEZURN** WBC, WBO
U.S. • 7-1-0 (2 KOs)
3 **EMA KOZIN**
Slovenia • 21-0-1 (11 KOs)
4 **CHRISTINA HAMMER**
Germany • 26-1-0 (12 KOs)
5 **SHADASIA GREEN**
U.S. • 8-0-0 (7 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHT
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

C **CLARESSA SHIELDS** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)
1 **SAVANNAH MARSHALL**
U.K. • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **CHRISTINA HAMMER**
Germany • 26-1-0 (12 KOs)
3 **EMA KOZIN**
Slovenia • 21-0-1 (11 KOs)
4 **FEMKE HERMANS**
Belgium • 12-3-0 (5 KOs)
5 **ALMA IBARRA**
Mexico • 9-1-0 (4 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

C **CLARESSA SHIELDS** RING, WBC, WBO, IBF
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)
1 **MARIE EVE DICAIRE**
Canada • 17-1-0 (0 KOs)
2 **CHRIS NAMUS**
Uruguay • 25-6-0 (8 KOs)
3 **HANNAH RANKIN**
U.K. • 10-5-0 (2 KOs)
4 **CYNTHIA LOZANO**
Mexico • 9-0-0 (7 KOs)
5 **AIDYL CARDENAS**
U.S. • 3-0-0 (0 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

C **JESSICA MCCASKILL** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.S. • 10-2-0 (3 KOs)
1 **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
Norway • 36-2-0 (9 KOs)
2 **LAYLA MCCARTER**
U.S. • 44-13-5 (11 KOs)
3 **ORNELLA DOMINI**
Switzerland • 15-2-0 (3 KOs)
4 **VICTORIA BUSTOS**
Argentina • 21-6-0 (0 KOs)
5 **LOLITA MUZEYA**
Zambia • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **CHANTELLE CAMERON** WBC
U.K. • 14-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **MARY MCGEE** IBF
U.S. • 27-3-0 (15 KOs)
3 **ERICA FARIAS**
Argentina • 26-5-0 (10 KOs)
4 **KALI REIS** WBA
U.S. • 18-7-1 (5 KOs)
5 **ANAHI SANCHEZ**
Argentina • 20-5-0 (12 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

C **KATIE TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
Ireland • 19-0-0 (6 KOs)
1 **DELFINE PERSOON**
Belgium • 45-3-0 (18 KOs)
2 **ESTELLE MOSSELY**
Belgium • 9-0-0 (1 KOs)
3 **MIRIAM GUTIERREZ**
Spain • 13-1-0 (5 KOs)
4 **NATASHA JONAS**
U.K. • 9-2-1 (7 KOs)
5 **JENNIFER HAN**
U.S. • 18-4-1 (18 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **MIKAELA MAYER** WBO
U.S. • 15-0-0 (5 KOs)
2 **TERRI HARPER** WBC
U.K. • 11-0-1 (6 KOs)
3 **MAIVA HAMADOUCHE** IBF
France • 22-1-0 (18 KOs)
4 **HYUN MI CHOI** WBA
South Korea • 19-0-1 (5 KOs)
5 **EWA BRODNICKA**
Poland • 20-1-0 (2 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **AMANDA SERRANO** WBC, WBO
Puerto Rico • 41-1-1 (30 KOs)
2 **SARAH MAHFOUD**
Denmark • 10-0-0 (3 KOs)
3 **ERIKA CRUZ HERNANDEZ** WBA
Mexico • 13-1-0 (3 KOs)
4 **JELENA MRDJENOVICH**
Canada • 41-11-2 (19 KOs)
5 **NINA MEINKE**
Germany • 12-2-0 (3 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **JACKIE NAVA**
Mexico • 38-4-4 (16 KOs)
2 **DINA THORSLUND** WBO
Denmark • 16-0-0 (6 KOs)
3 **YAMILETH MERCADO** WBC
Mexico • 18-3-0 (5 KOs)
4 **SEGOLENE LEFEBVRE**
France • 14-0-0 (1 KOs)
5 **MARIANA JUAREZ**
Mexico • 55-10-4 (19 KOs)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **ZULINA MUNOZ**
Mexico • 53-3-2 (30 KOs)
2 **YULIHAN LUNA AVILA** WBC
Mexico • 22-3-1 (4 KOs)
3 **MARIANA JUAREZ**
Mexico • 55-10-4 (19 KOs)
4 **MARIA CECILIA ROMAN** IBF
Argentina • 15-5-1 (0 KOs)
5 **DINA THORSLUND** WBO
Denmark • 16-0-0 (6 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **LOURDES JUAREZ** WBC
Mexico • 32-2-0 (4 KOs)
2 **GUADALUPE MARTINEZ**
Mexico • 20-10-0 (6 KOs)
3 **JESSICA CHAVEZ**
Mexico • 32-5-3 (4 KOs)
4 **DIANA FERNANDEZ**
Mexico • 23-4-1 (4 KOs)
5 **MIYO YOSHIDA**
Japan • 15-2-0 (0 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **NAOKO FUJIOKA** WBA
Japan • 19-2-1 (7 KOs)
2 **ARELY MUCINO** WBO
Mexico • 29-3-2 (10 KOs)
3 **MARLEN ESPARZA**
U.S. • 10-1-0 (1 KOs) WBC
4 **IBETH ZAMORA**
Mexico • 32-7-0 (12 KOs)
5 **JESSICA NERY PLATA**
Mexico • 27-2-0 (3 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

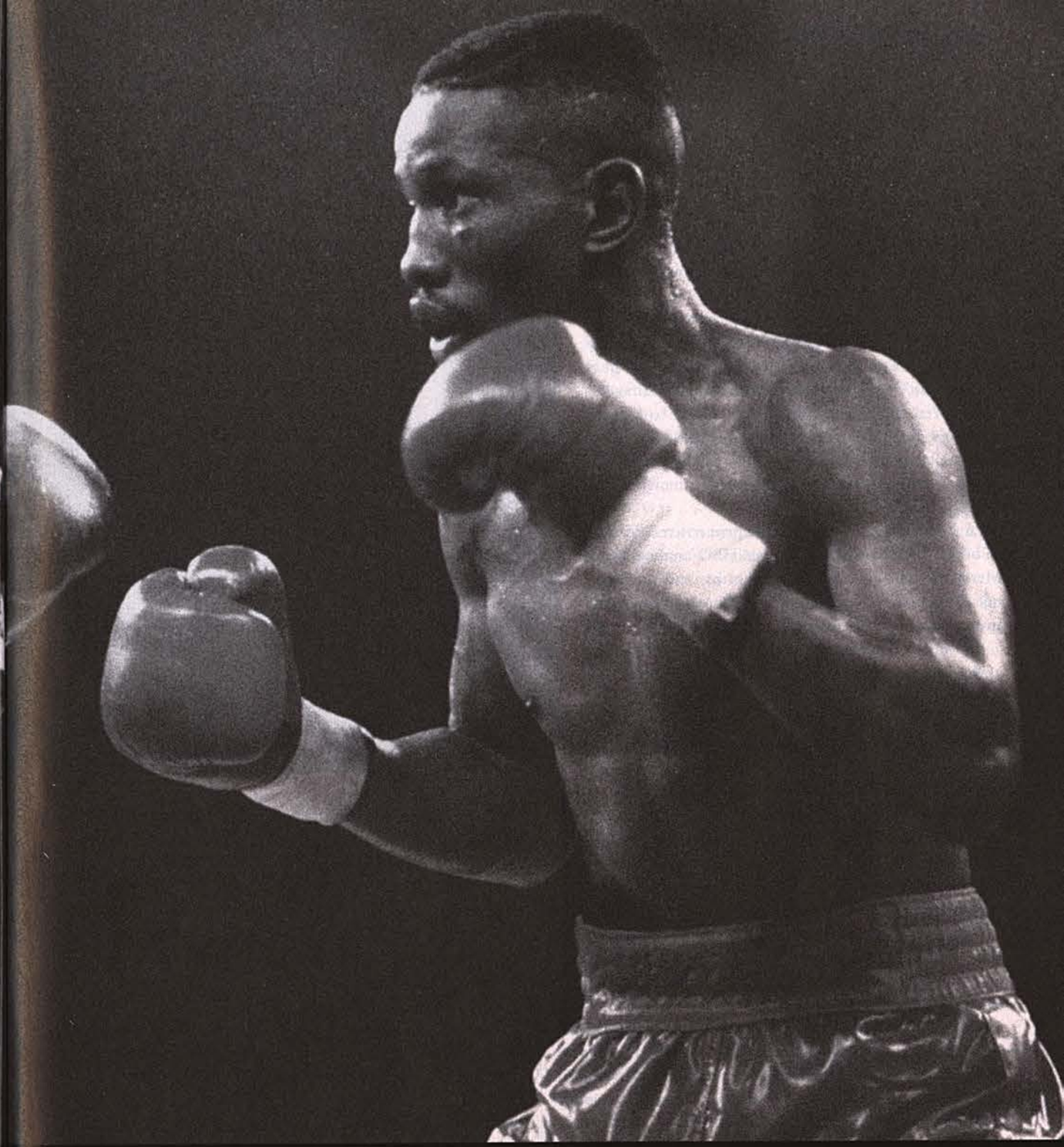
C **(VACANT)**
1 **SENIESA ESTRADA** WBO
U.S. • 21-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **EVELYN BERMUDEZ** IBF
Argentina • 14-0-1 (4 KOs)
3 **KIM CLAVEL**
Canada • 14-0-0 (2 KOs)
4 **TSUNAMI TENKAI**
Japan • 28-13-1 (16 KOs)
5 **TANIA ENRIQUEZ**
Mexico • 17-0-0 (8 KOs)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **SENIESA ESTRADA** WBA
U.S. • 21-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **CHRISTINA RUPPRECHT** WBC
Germany • 11-0-1 (3 KOs)
3 **YOKASTA VALLE** IBF
Nicaragua • 22-2-0 (9 KOs)
4 **ANABEL ORTIZ**
Mexico • 31-4-0 (4 KOs)
5 **ETSUKO TADA** WBO
Japan • 20-3-3 (7 KOs)

ATOMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 102 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **MONSERRAT ALARCON** WBA
Mexico • 16-4-2 (0 KOs)
2 **FABIANA BYTYQI** WBC
Czech Rep. • 17-0-1 (5 KOs)
3 **MIKA IWAKAWA** WBO
Japan • 10-5-1 (3 KOs)
4 **ERI MATSUDA**
Japan • 4-0-1 (1 KO)
5 **YENIFER LEON**
Venezuela • 13-3-0 (9 KOs)



THE PERFECT STORM

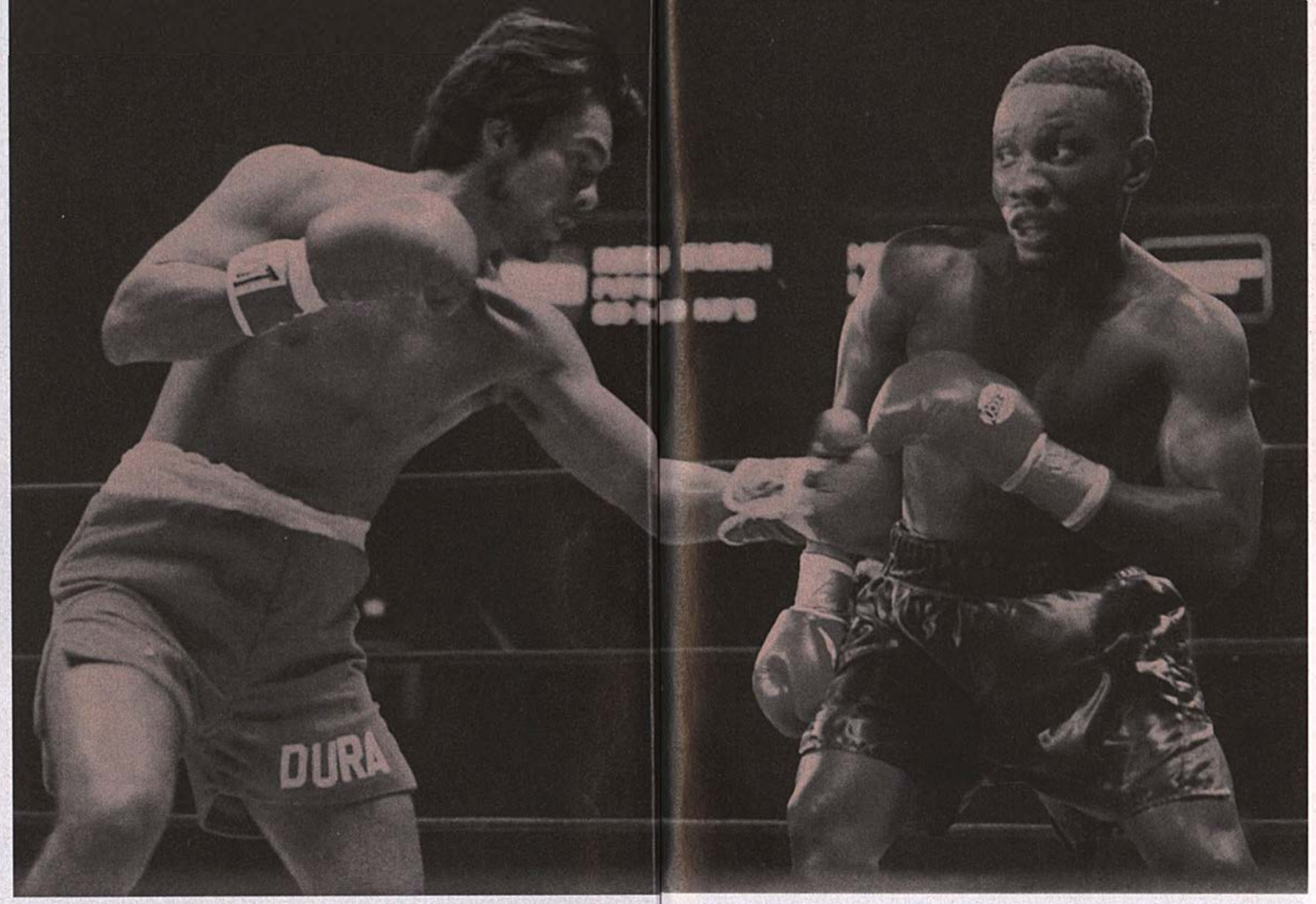
A HALL-OF-FAME PANEL OF BOXING PUNDITS PONDER WHO WOULD HAVE WON A FIRE VS. FINESSE LIGHTWEIGHT MYTHICAL MATCHUP BETWEEN POUND-FOR-POUND GREATS **ROBERTO DURAN** AND **PERNELL WHITAKER**

By **Ron Borges**

At first blush it seems an easy call to make. When one fighter was known as "Manos de Piedra" ("Hands of Stone") while the other was called "Sweet Pea," what's to debate? Would not hands of stone quite logically crush sweet peas? Not so fast, Sherlock, if the Sweet Pea in question is Pernell Whitaker.

Whitaker is one of the greatest boxers in the history of the sport. He was a master defensive fighter, but much more than that. He was a fighter who could turn defensive mastery into offensive mystery, which is why he held some form of a world championship for over eight years in his prime. It is also why he is considered one of the greatest

COMPOSITIONS BY BRIAN HARDY



lightweights in boxing history.

Whitaker was one of those rare fighters who would have been successful in any era, the skills that helped him dominate the 1990s easily transferable to the 1970s or the 1940s. But could he have found a way to bewitch and bewilder Roberto Duran, who many consider the greatest lightweight of all time? That is a question that makes a mythical showdown between them at 135 pounds difficult to sort out.

Duran is certainly on the short list of the best lightweights in history alongside Ike Williams, Benny Leonard, Tony Canzoneri, Joe Gans, Lou Ambers and Carlos Ortiz. You could probably pare that list down even further and leave the debate to Duran, Williams, Leonard and Gans. But what turns a fight between Duran and Whitaker into a matchup of mythic proportions is that Whitaker belongs somewhere on that short list as well.

"A boxer like Whitaker in his prime is really hard to beat," said 90-year-old former HBO analyst Larry Merchant, who saw both in their prime and so speaks not simply from the heart or a dusty record book but from personal recollection.

"In any showdown we had between a great boxer and a great banger, the boxer usually neutralized the banger and found a way to win … but we're talking about Roberto Duran. Whitaker always managed to get the best of it, but Duran would have been the best of the best of them.

"Duran had boxing talent as well as unequaled relentlessness. His defense was often overlooked because he was such a ferociously relentless attacker. He knew how to corner a guy and break him down. At some point, Whitaker would have to cope with that pressure, and few people could against Duran at his best.

"Having said that, you can't underestimate Whitaker. Yes, he was a boxer first, but in times of need he could turn it up and go for it, savagely at times, if he felt he had to or believed the opening was there.

"The crowd is an element in any close prizefight. It can influence judges. Whitaker was so good at what he did you had to respect him. He wasn't just another boxer trying to avoid getting hit. But because of his style, Duran would have had the crowd on his side. The crowd would clap for Whitaker but roar for Duran, and that's a factor that can't be ignored with two fighters of their capabilities. It's certainly a matchup I would have loved to see. In the end, my brain says Whitaker … but my gut says Duran."

Perhaps Duran wears Whitaker down late in the fight, as he did to so many opponents. Then again, Whitaker could so frustrate and fluster Duran with his unorthodox southpaw style that he might begin to break down that legendary resolve and make it a fight on his terms. Nobody can say for sure, which is what makes this fight fascinating.

Proponents of either willingly conceded this is among the toughest dream matchups to analyze, and that was certainly true for boxing historian Mike Silver. When first presented with this idea, he immediately said, "This is such a tough matchup, I can't come up with a quick answer. This will take some analysis."

Silver then asked to revisit the question after spending two days watching film of each in some of their classic lightweight fights. Only then did he conclude who might win and why.

"Duran is undeniably one of boxing's greatest fighters, but Whitaker was a great athlete with an unusual style, and that style makes this a great fight," said Silver, who is the author of The Night the Referee Hit Back – Memorable Moments from the World of Boxing. "Some might look at the way Whitaker broke down Julio Cesar Chavez and say Duran was the same kind of opponent, but Whitaker never met an opponent like Duran. Everything Chavez brought to the table, Duran brings twice or three times as much. He was very intelligent, a harder puncher, and he varied his attack.

"Whitaker was an elusive speedster and a great athlete, but what's lacking was technical expertise. In many fights he got away with a lot of things he wouldn't have gotten away with against Duran, things that would have gotten him hit.

"Although it would be a difficult fight for both of them, after watching them at their best, I feel Duran's relentless body attack and pressure would get to Whitaker in a way

Could Whitaker have coped with Duran's savage and relentless assaults in a fast-paced distance bout?

he could not escape for 12 rounds and certainly not for 15. I could see it possibly becoming ugly for Whitaker in the late rounds, but I think it unlikely Duran would knock him out. In my mind, Duran wins a decision."

The potential length of the fight was significant to Hall of Fame trainer Freddie Roach. Roach admired both fighters and knew their styles well, so when he broke the fight down it really became two fights in his mind.

"In a 15-round fight, I like Duran," Roach said. "In a 12-round fight, I like Whitaker. For 12 rounds, Whitaker might well be able to outbox Duran, but not over the real championship distance. Those three extra rounds make it a different fight altogether.

"Those last three rounds were often Duran's best. He was so relentless and such a great finisher. Pernell had great speed and great skills, a defensive master, but I don't think he had the power to keep Duran off him for 15 rounds.

"Duran was also a great boxer. Not good. Great. He didn't get much credit for it, but it's why he won so many times late in fights. Whitaker was flashier and more unpredictable with some of his moves, but the truth is they were both great boxers, and over 15 rounds the difference is one guy had a stronger punch. Eventually that's the difference-maker.

"Whitaker had that speed and he was a natural fighter. He could improvise and frustrate you, standing right in front of you and still not getting hit. That can wear down a fighter's mind, but Duran had the answer for that kind of fighter. He was a great body puncher. At first, he was just a tough guy who could knock you out with body shots and pressure, like he did against Ken Buchanan when he first won the lightweight title, but he had two great trainers in Ray Arcel and Freddie Brown and he learned how to box. When he did, who beat him?"

For 72 fights, nobody, although Esteban De Jesus was awarded a close 10-round decision in a non-title fight five months after Duran broke Buchanan apart. Duran was a 2-to-1 underdog that night in Madison Square Garden against Buchanan, a cute boxer with skills akin to Whitaker's. What Duran did to him was nothing short of a mugging.

As things turned out, he later did the same to De Jesus, outpointing him in a title rematch and taking him apart in a third fight on January 21, 1978. That was Duran's final night as a lightweight and he made it a memorable one, unifying the WBA and WBC titles by stopping De Jesus in the 12th round of what became a one-sided beating. When it was over, he had made clear his superiority not only over De Jesus but the entire division, leaving it with a 63-1 record.

Longtime Philadelphia fight promoter and boxing historian J. Russell Peltz doesn't question Duran's place in history, but when he considered a matchup against Whitaker, his first thought was the night Wilfred Benitez outboxed Duran over 15 hard rounds. Benitez was himself a master boxer looking to counterpunch but also adept at standing straight in front of an opponent and fending off his punches as if he was fencing more than fighting.

"Benitez was in the same category as Whitaker," Peltz said. "A clear win for Benitez leads me to believe Whitaker would have found a way to outpoint Duran.

"I think of Duran's second fight with Edwin Viruet, too. He was also a master boxer and he gave Duran problems. Those kind of guys gave him trouble, and no one was more trouble in that regard than Whitaker.

"Pete would have had to step up the pace against Duran and not be outworked, because Duran was more active than Chavez and not as reckless. He was aggressive, but in a controlled way. Duran would have to get rough and dirty, which he was willing to do, but in the end it comes down to styles. It doesn't take anything away from Duran. It's just that someone like Whitaker was the worst possible matchup for him. Whitaker had the style to give Duran fits. He always hated fighting guys who weren't there to be hit, and Whitaker certainly wasn't."

Whitaker once made that clear when he boasted, "I don't

care who I'm fighting. I don't care if it's God. If I don't want God to hit me, He's not going to hit me."

Whitaker was the king of the big bamboozle. His longtime promotional stablemate and Olympic teammate Evander Holyfield once described him as "a sneaky guy, in a nice way." What he meant was Whitaker could be dipping, diving, diverting and deluding an opponent with his defense and then, suddenly, drill him in the face two and three times and be gone, like smoke over an ashtray.

What would have made Whitaker particularly difficult for Duran is that he was impossible to figure out because often even he didn't know what he might do next. He had defensive instincts almost without peer, bolstered by fast-twitch muscles that responded without hesitation to his every command. He was, in short, a handful for anybody, even Duran.

"Both guys have the means to give each other trouble," Hall of Fame trainer Teddy Atlas said. "That's what makes this interesting. It's not Joe Frazier vs. Mike Tyson. It's not just a thunderstorm and heavy rain. There's a lot of elements to this.

"Duran was a rare combination of fire and brimstone. He had an attacking mentality, but it wasn't just anger. It was controlled anger coupled with science. It's rare in boxing that you see a guy with that level of intensity and that level of technique. A perpetual punching machine with a plan and the skill to execute it.

"Duran also was relentless. Punches affected him the way raindrops affect a windshield. They don't. But he boxed like a guy who didn't want to get hit. He was willing to get hit, but he had the technique and the smarts to avoid most of the damage that usually comes with his kind of relentlessness.

"Pernell was a guy who could stand right in front of you and you couldn't hit him in the ass with a handful of buckshot, but he had another attribute most of those kind of guys don't have. He had a willingness to come right back punching. Whitaker had an aptitude for staying in the pocket, making you miss by a half inch and then making you pay by being in position to throw back and having the mindset to do it. He didn't make you miss by a foot, because then he wouldn't be in position to land. Miss by an inch then – BANG! Hit you back. Pernell didn't just come with defense. He also cared about getting in your ass.

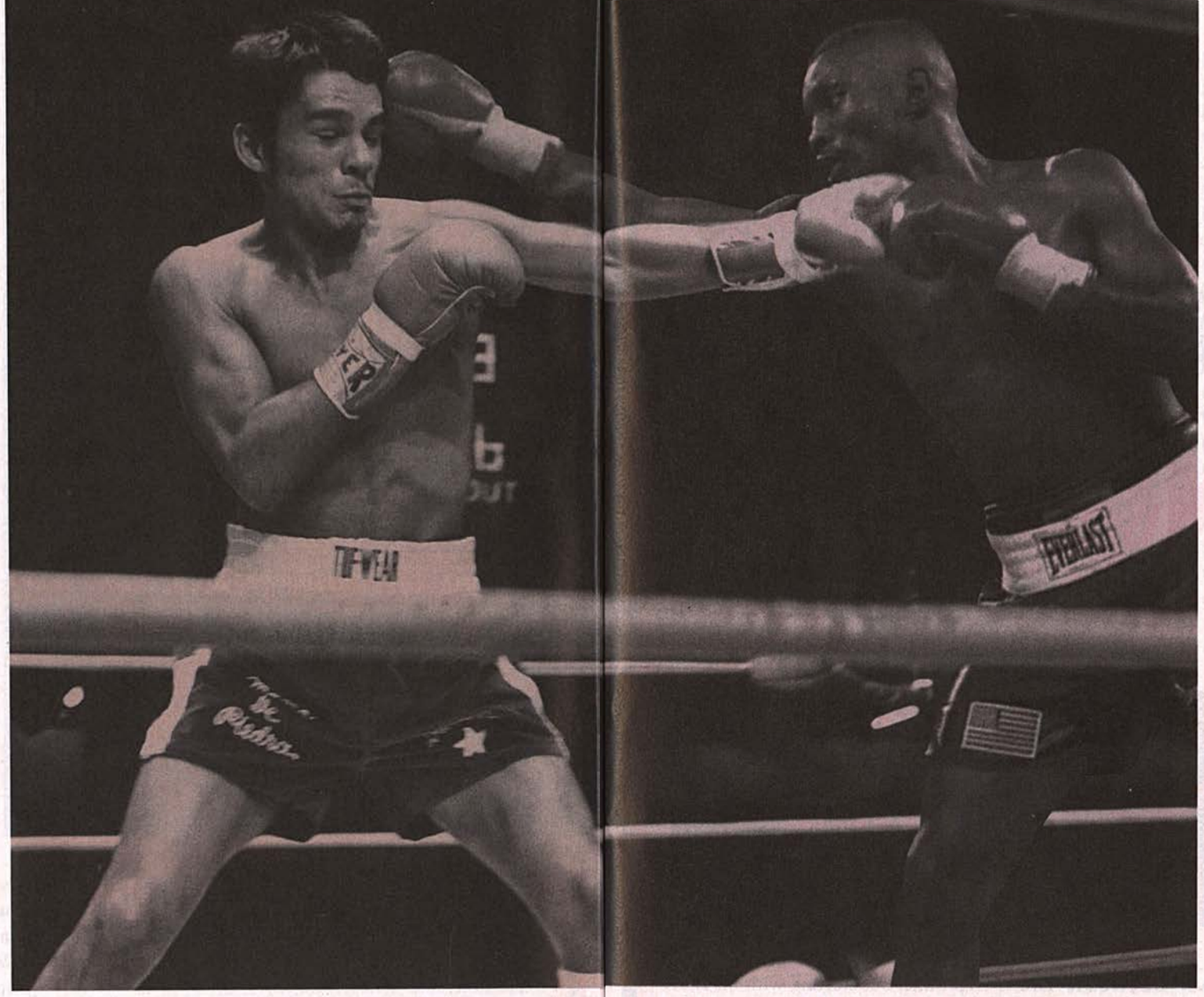
"He did it in a different way, but like Duran he had the ability to get to an opponent's soul. It was more subtle than Duran's way but every bit as ferocious. Duran hit you like a Mack truck. Whitaker was a Porsche. You don't want to be run over by a Mack truck, but who wants to get hit by a Porsche?"

No one, including Duran, but he was willing to make that chilling bargain, as he did against Benitez when he lost a 15-round decision to him 15 months after the debacle of the second Leonard fight – the infamous "No mas" fight when Duran seemingly quit for no reason in the middle of what was at the time a close fight. His courageous effort against Benitez – in which he was still pressing in the fight's final minutes after having trained on Coiba, a penal colony island 15 miles off the coast of Panama, to avoid the temptations of the fast life he'd begun to live after defeating Leonard to win the welterweight title on June 20, 1980 – won him back his reputation if not a junior middleweight title.

Duran was 72-1 after his win over Leonard, the only "loss" being to De Jesus. What would that Duran have done against Whitaker?

"It's a very tricky fight to call," Atlas said. "Pernell had the ability to negate power. Duran was a power pitcher. Whitaker was a pitcher who hit the corners and changed speeds. Either way, they both took the bat out of your hands. Pernell was so good, Duran would have had to be the guy who beat Leonard to win. Anything less, he'd lose, but at the end of the day, the very best Duran beats the very best Whitaker."

Miguel Diaz, the 83-year-old trainer and cut man



Whitaker's busy right jab is one weapon that may have flustered and befuddled Hands of Stone.

extraordinaire, agrees. In his mind, Duran was "the best fighter I've seen in my life. Whitaker was good, but Duran was the best of the best.

"Roberto was a natural born fighter. He could box much better than people imagine. He finished his career with barely a cut around his eyes. It would have been very difficult, but Roberto would have found a way. You can't say Whitaker was nothing. He was a puzzle, hard to solve. Whitaker was a master of defense, but Roberto was the master of boxing."

Former light heavyweight champion and veteran trainer Eddie Mustafa Muhammad's first reaction to such a match was, "That's a great one." His next reaction?

"I got to go with Duran," Muhammad said. "Duran wasn't just a great puncher. He had speed at lightweight. His defense was great, too. Pernell was a great boxer also, but Duran was a huge puncher at 135 and a great boxer.

"At lightweight, Duran was quick enough to cut the ring off and knew how to do it and then go to the body to slow Whitaker down. He didn't care where he hit you. Ribs, hips, maybe below the belt. However he had to do it, he'd slow you down … then he'd come get you. This wouldn't be a runaway, but Duran finds a way to win."

At 135 pounds, that's what they both did. After he beat De Jesus a third time and said goodbye to lightweight, Duran had only one loss in 64 fights. Whitaker was 23-1 when he became the first undisputed lightweight champion since Duran, stopping Juan Nazario in one round on August 11, 1990. He would defend the undisputed crown three times, finishing 27-1 before moving up in weight. For argument's sake, let's say both squared off as the final fight of their lightweight careers. They would have been a combined 90-2 with both losses later avenged. This would have been a duel between two of boxing's greatest lightweights that demanded the winner muster all his skill, will, ring generalship and tenacity to win.

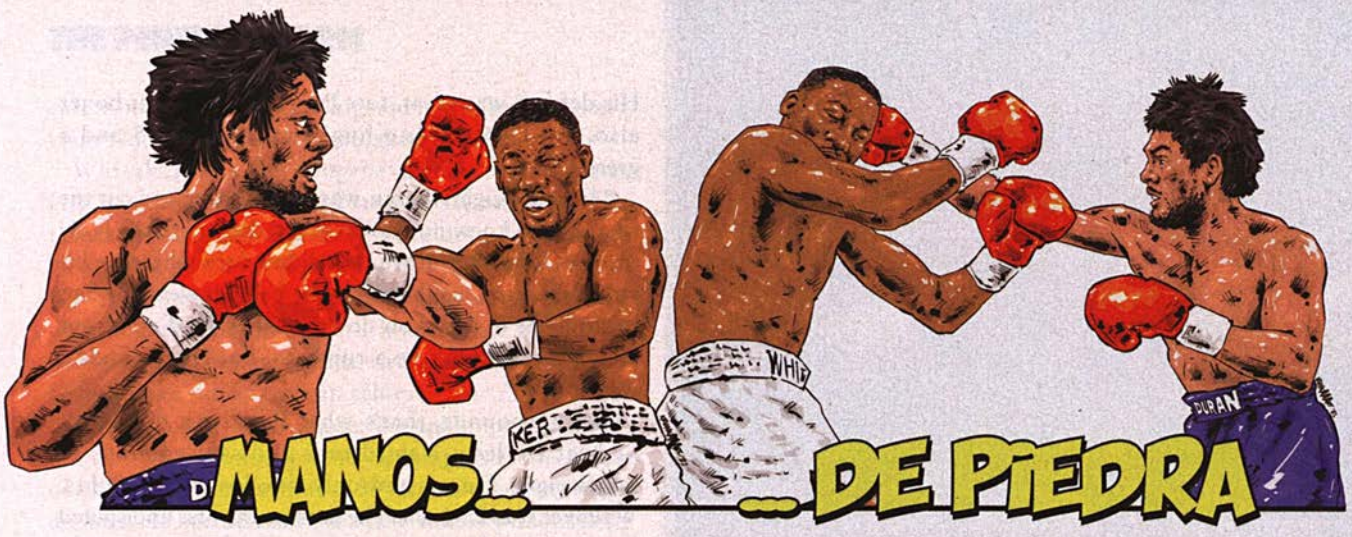
"It's the perfect lightweight matchup of all time, when you think about it," said veteran ringside analyst Al Bernstein. "The Duran who stopped Ken Buchanan was a terrific fighter. Buchanan had many of the same skills as Whitaker but he couldn't deal with the ferocity of Duran. That's what this fight boils down to.

"Whitaker dominated a good, aggressive fighter in Chavez, but Duran was a more nuanced fighter. He had more boxing skill and the same relentlessness. In the end, every Whitaker fight revolved around 'Could his opponent hit him?' I don't think Duran would be worried about the preciseness of his punches. He'd just land somewhere, and at some point Whitaker would have to be more offensive than he liked to deal with Duran's relentlessness better than Buchanan did.

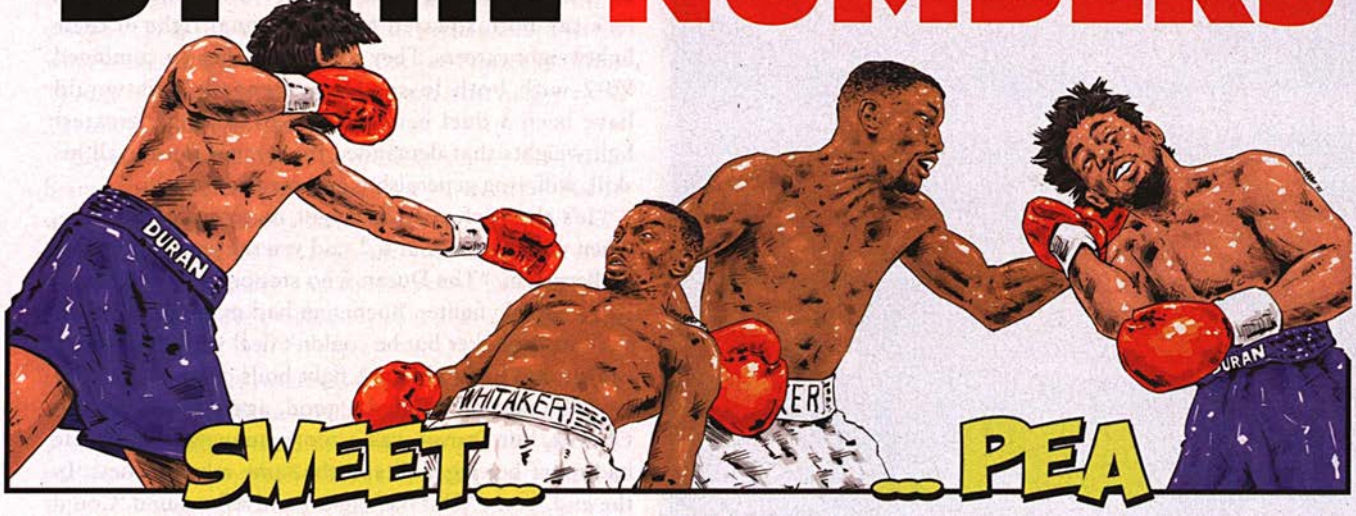
"Who's the referee? That's part of it, too. Would he be someone who breaks them all the time or would he let Duran work inside and get away with some of the dirty things he would do if you let him? Is it going to be a knife fight or a pillow fight? The referee plays a huge role in that."

Bernstein then addressed the big question: "The winner? That's a rough one. Oh my God! I'm going to say Whitaker. I know Duran at 135 was a beast. Whitaker would have to deal with his aura as well as his skill. I think he could. I think he could frustrate Duran and throw him off his game. If not, he loses."

That is how razor-thin the margin is between them. Top Rank matchmaker Bruce Trampler chose Duran but quickly added, "Whitaker is a tough out. It's a 6-5 pick 'em fight. It's a close, hard fight for them both. The only thing I'm really sure of is it would have been a great series of fights. You don't decide things between two fighters as great as those two in one night."



BY THE NUMBERS



A COMPUBOX ANALYSIS OF THE STELLAR LIGHTWEIGHT TITLE REIGNS OF **ROBERTO DURAN** AND **PERNELL WHITAKER** – AND A STATISTICAL GUESS AT HOW A 15-ROUND DREAM CLASH WOULD HAVE PLAYED OUT

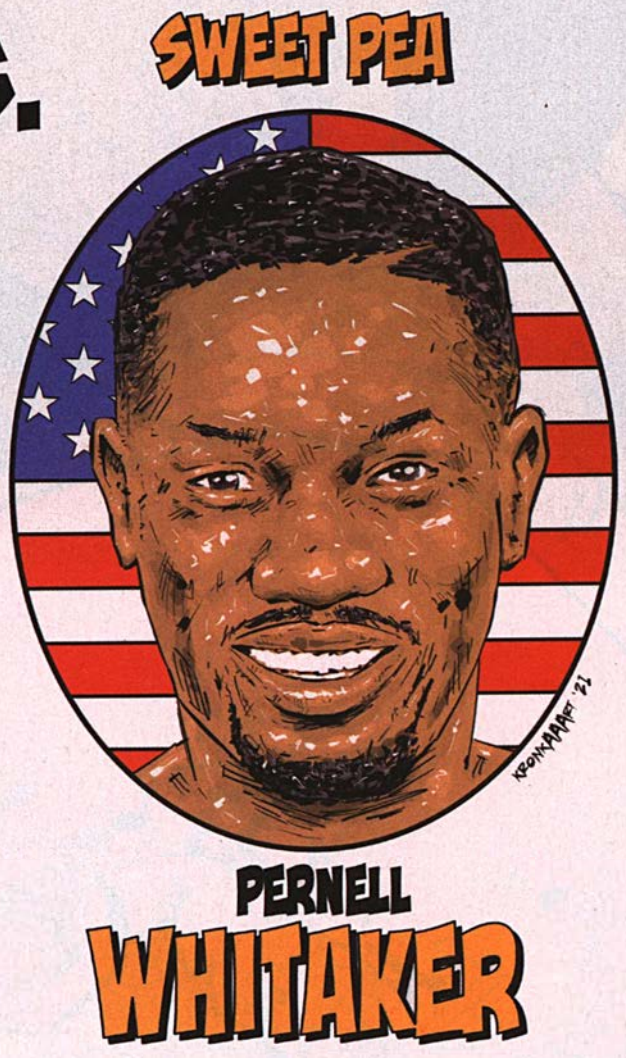
By **Lee Groves**

A showdown between the lightweight versions of Roberto Duran and Pernell Whitaker would've been a dream match on several levels. Not only did they dominate their eras, they did so with supreme skill and versatility; Duran was a slugger whose defensive prowess and long-range game matured, while Whitaker was a technical wizard capable of producing occasional bursts of blunt-force trauma (just ask Louie Lomeli and Juan Nazario, whom he stopped in the early rounds of title bouts. Or Greg Haugen, who suffered the first knockdown of his career – pro or amateur – against the man whose friends dubbed him "Sweet Pete," later misheard by a reporter as "Sweet Pea," which stuck). Like Duran, Whitaker's style evolved; he cut wide circles around Jose Luis Ramirez in fight one, but starting with his first title-winning fight against Haugen in February 1989 he often fought "in the pocket" and punched off pivots while remaining extremely hard to hit.

Although both engaged in non-title fights during their tenures, this CompuBox study isolated their lightweight championship contests, which, for Whitaker, included his controversial split decision loss to Ramirez in March 1988, a defeat he avenged 17 months later to become a unified champion. Whitaker engaged in 10 title fights to Duran's 13 and the statistics show that while both were busy on offense, their punch distribution was drastically different. Jabs comprised 55.7 percent of Whitaker's total output while power punches made up 63.3 percent of Duran's (the CompuBox average for

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KRONKAAART.COM

VS.

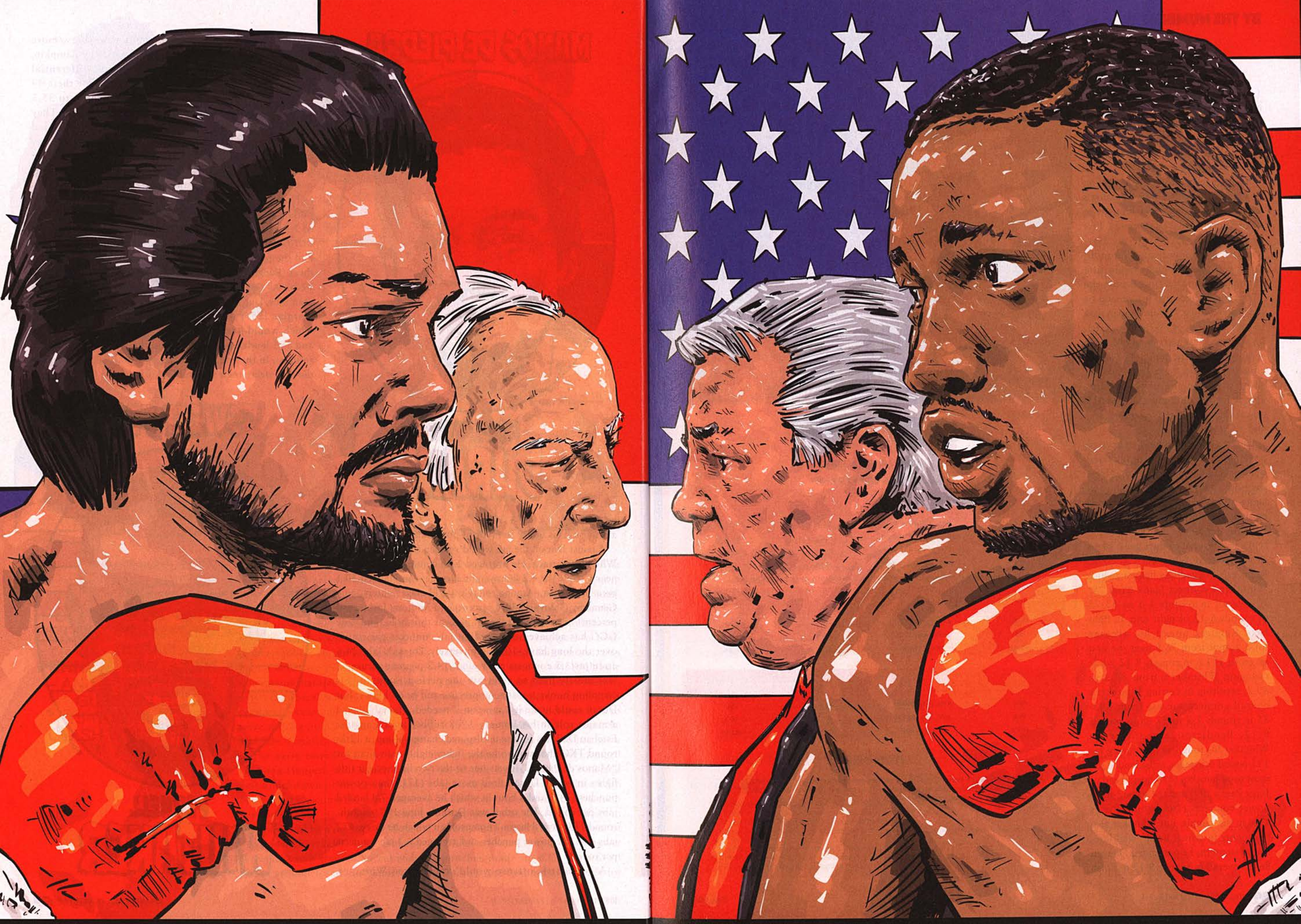


all divisions is 60-40 in favor of power shots).

Against Duran, the jab would've been the centerpiece of Whitaker's attack. He averaged 11.8 connects per round – nearly triple the 4.2 lightweight average – and landed 30.1 percent of them. Among today's world-class fighters, only Gennadiy Golovkin (30.4 percent) and Anthony Joshua (30 percent) have attained the 30 percent threshold, and only GGG has achieved double-digit jab connects per round over the long haul (10.1). Conversely, Duran's jab (24.6 attempts/3.5 connects per round, 14.2 percent accuracy) was mostly used to ascertain the perfect range for his crippling hooks, crosses, uppercuts and body blows, but Duran could make it a weapon if needed. The jab played a major role in his January 1978 rubber match against Esteban De Jesus for the undisputed championship, a 12th-round TKO that was to be the lightweight swan song for "Manos de Piedra." It was one of the two lightweight title fights in which Duran fired more jabs (471) than power punches (341) and a bout in which he averaged 7.4 landed jabs per round. The other was Duran's June 1973 eighth-round TKO over Hector Thompson, in which he threw 477 jabs and 381 power punches and averaged 6.2 jab connects per round.

A jab-centric offense would've benefited Whitaker, because the three Duran opponents who threw more jabs than power punches (Ken Buchanan, Ray Lampkin, Lou Bizzarro) greatly reduced the output differential favoring Duran (53.9 punches per round for their 49 compared to 73 punches per round for Duran to 35.3 for those whose output favored power punches). They landed 4.6 jabs per round to Duran's 3.6 (Duran led 3.4 to 2.1 jab connects per round against the other opponents) and slashed Duran's power percentage lead to 49.3 percent-41.4 percent compared to 48.3 percent-34.8 percent for the others.

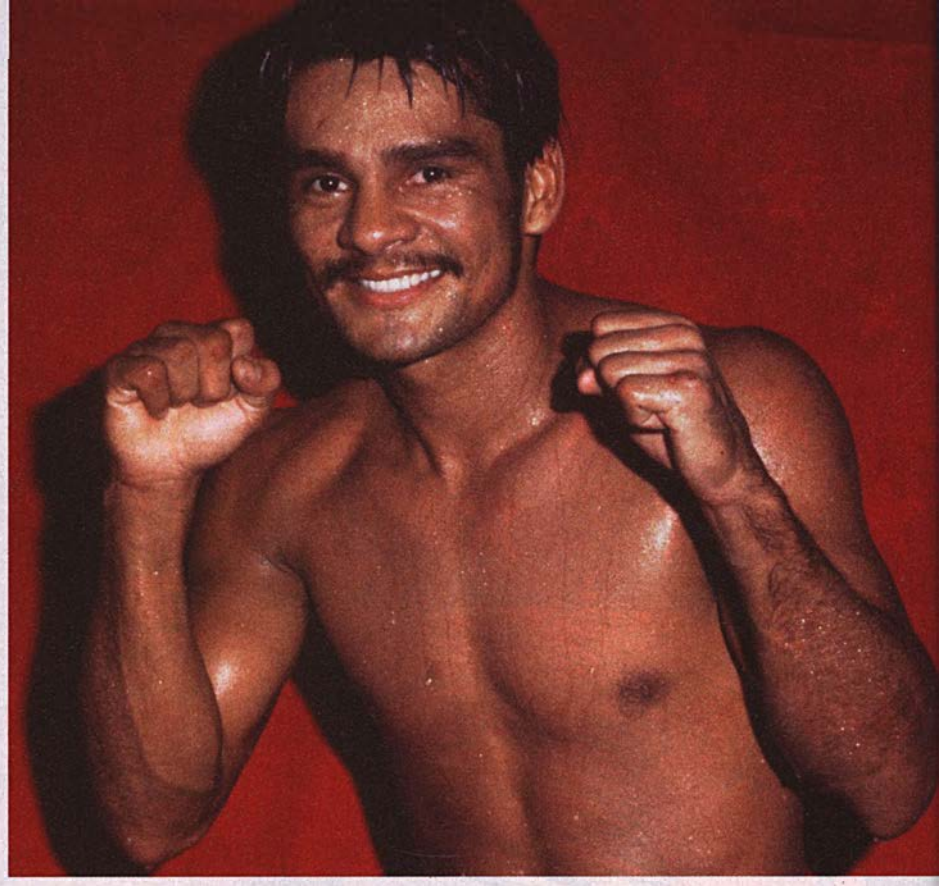
The bad news for Whitaker was that Duran still outlanded all three jab-centric foes by per-round averages of 7.3 overall and 8.3 power (which would have translated to 109.5 total connects and 124.5 landed power punches had the fights gone 15 rounds), then went on to stop all three (Buchanan in the 13th, Lampkin and Bizzarro in the 14th). As for the 10 foes who fired more power punches than jabs, Duran outlanded them by even larger per-round margins (25.4 to 11.1 overall and 21.9 to 8.9 power, which would have translated to 199.5 overall connects and 195 landed power shots had the fights completed 15 rounds). In the end, all Buchanan, Lampkin and Bizzarro did was delay their inevitable destructions, thanks to the



15-round championship distance used in Duran's era (and for this dream match), but the good news for Whitaker was that he was a better all-around fighter than all of Duran's challengers.

Another relevant issue surrounding this match would've been Whitaker's southpaw stance and how it might've negatively affected Duran. The Panamanian faced just one left-handed challenger, and Leoncio Ortiz was the only lightweight title challenger to take Duran into the 15th round, thanks to his version of the "rope-a-dope." While he managed to outjab Duran (45-37 in connects), he absorbed tremendous punishment – especially to the body (127-82 in connects) – and he fell 21 seconds short of going the distance after absorbing 355 total punches and 318 power shots compared to landing 167 and 122 respectively.

Duran's best bet would've been to apply pressure, use his underrated quickness to cut off the ring and blast the body, because Whitaker showed signs of erosion in the late rounds against Ramirez (both fights) and Freddie Pendleton, both of whom remained devoted to their game plans in the face of Whitaker's success. Ramirez's doggedness helped reduce Whitaker's connect leads from 79-27 overall in rounds 1-5 to 83-73 in rounds 6-12 of fight one. In fight two, Ramirez upped his average total output from 76.9 over the first seven to 101.6 in rounds 8-12 while reducing Whitaker's from 89.2 to 69.2, resulting in cutting Whitaker's overall connect success from 293-85 in rounds 1-8 to 97-68 in rounds 9-12. Pendleton arguably gave Whitaker his toughest test during his 135-pound title reign, as he landed the most total punches (198, just ahead of Jorge Paez's 197) and the second-most power connects (165 behind Paez's 196) in the sample. But Whitaker also had fights in which he showed late-round strength; he outlanded Haugen 86-22 overall in rounds 9-12 to finish



COMPUBOX
EVERY PUNCH COUNTS EST. 1985

COMPARISON REPORT

DURAN- 13 lightweight title fights

TOTAL PUNCHES			
DURAN	CATEGORY	13 OPPONENTS	LIGHTWEIGHT AVG.
67	AVG. THROWN/RD	39.6	58.2
24.1 (10.5)	AVG. LANDED/RD (BODY)	12 (3)	16.6 (8.9)
36%	PERCENTAGE	30.3%	28.5%
47.9%	BODY LANDED RATIO	35.6%	N/A

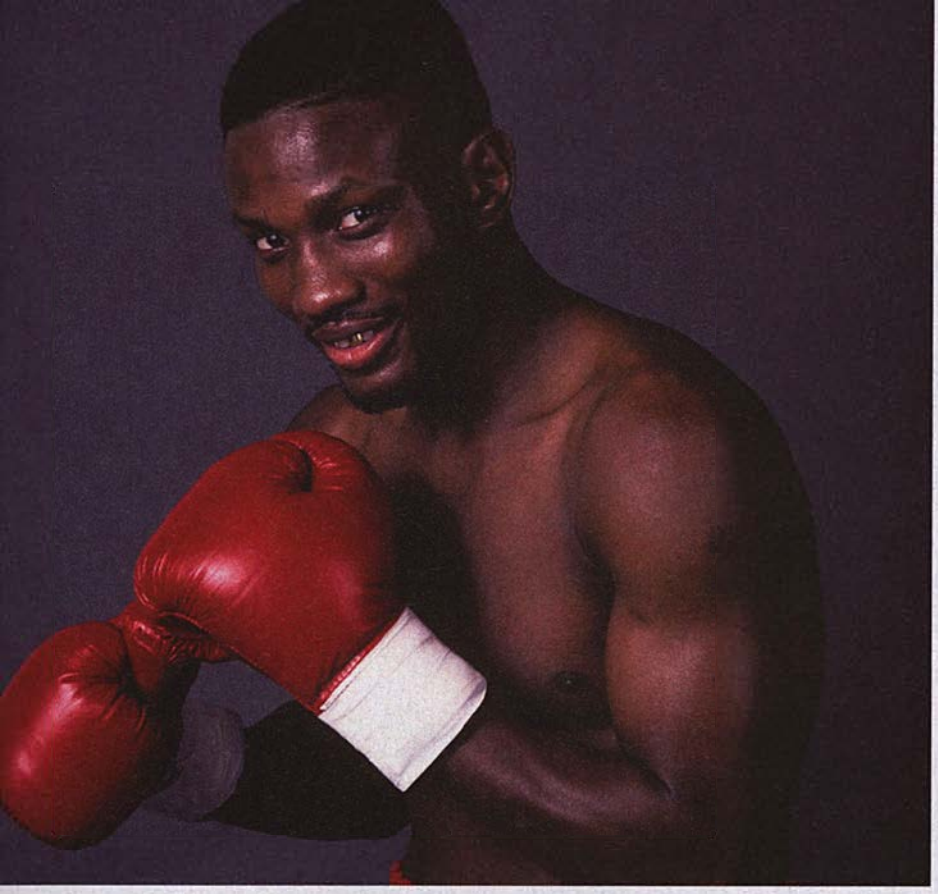
Body Landed Ratio is the percentage of punches landed to the body compared to total punches landed.

JAB			
DURAN	CATEGORY	13 OPPONENTS	LIGHTWEIGHT AVG.
24.6	AVG. THROWN/RD	14.9	23.4
3.5	AVG. LANDED/RD	2.9	4.2
14.2%	PERCENTAGE	19.5%	17.9%

POWER			
DURAN	CATEGORY	13 OPPONENTS	LIGHTWEIGHT AVG.
42.4	AVG. THROWN/RD	24.7	34.8
20.6	AVG. LANDED/RD	9.1	12.3
48.6%	PERCENTAGE	36.8%	35.3%

REPORT NOTES

- Duran landed (24.1) & threw (67) well above the lightweight avg. for total punches (16.6/58.2)
- 47.9% of Duran landed punches were body shots- 10.5 per round (CompuBox avg.: 29.5%)
- Duran landed 48.6% of his power punches (light. avg.: 35.3%)



with connect leads of 293-84 overall, 93-20 jabs and 200-94 power; bested Azumah Nelson 155-62 overall during the same period on his way to final connect leads of 464-179 overall, 286-32 jabs and 178-147 power; and did the same to Anthony Jones in rounds 9-12 (105-67 overall on his way to final leads of 426-173 overall, 197-45 jabs and 229-128 power).

Based on the stats and styles, Duran-Whitaker would've been a high-energy boxer-puncher classic. Whitaker's history suggests he would've produced a blazing beginning (he averaged 27 total connects and 73 attempted punches per round in the first four rounds of those title fights that went at least four) but Duran was no slouch in terms of fast starts, as he averaged 22 connects and 69 attempted punches in the first four stanzas. But when one factors Whitaker's decaying form against Ramirez (both fights) and Pendleton, as well as the fact that Duran's offensive attack was more consistent from start to finish, it is very possible that Duran's animalistic aggression and savage body attack (47.9 percent of total connects in eight CompuBox-tracked bouts) would've slowed Whitaker in the middle and late stages of this scheduled 15-rounder. While it is true that Whitaker was also a devoted body puncher (30.8 percent of total connects in five CompuBox-tracked fights, slightly above the 29.5 percent CompuBox norm), his connects didn't land with the same force – or with the same venom.

Assuming that both men report in the exquisite condition this dream fight demands – an extremely likely outcome, because each had Hall of Fame trainers in Ray Arcel and Freddie Brown (Duran) and George Benton and Lou Duva (Whitaker) – the guess is that Whitaker would have been resourceful enough to hear the final bell, as well as the announcement that Duran won a unanimous decision.

COMPUBOX
EVERY PUNCH COUNTS EST. 1985

COMPARISON REPORT

WHITAKER- 10 lightweight title fights

TOTAL PUNCHES			
WHITAKER	CATEGORY	10 OPPONENTS	LIGHTWEIGHT AVG.
70.4	AVG. THROWN/RD	59.4	58.2
27.2 (7.2)	AVG. LANDED/RD (BODY)	12.5 (5.4)	16.6 (8.9)
38.6%	PERCENTAGE	21%	28.5%
30.8%	BODY LANDED RATIO	50.5%	N/A

Body Landed Ratio is the percentage of punches landed to the body compared to total punches landed.

JAB			
WHITAKER	CATEGORY	10 OPPONENTS	LIGHTWEIGHT AVG.
39.2	AVG. THROWN/RD	20.9	23.4
11.8	AVG. LANDED/RD	2.2	4.2
30.1%	PERCENTAGE	10.5%	17.9%

POWER			
WHITAKER	CATEGORY	10 OPPONENTS	LIGHTWEIGHT AVG.
31.2	AVG. THROWN/RD	38.4	34.8
15.4	AVG. LANDED/RD	10.4	12.3
49.4%	PERCENTAGE	27.1%	35.3%

REPORT NOTES

IN 10 LIGHTWEIGHT TITLE FIGHTS:

- Whitaker avg'd 70.4 punches thrown per round (welter. avg.: 58.2)
- Whitaker landed 27.2 punches per round (38.6%) light. avg.: 16.6/28.5%
- Whitaker landed 11.8 jabs per round- nearly 3x the light. avg.
- Whitaker landed a lightweight record 286 jabs in his decision win (23.8 per round) over fellow Hall of Famer Azumah Nelson
- Whitaker landed nearly half his power punches (49.4%)- light. avg.: 35.3%
- Whitaker twice landed 400 or more punches in a fight: (vs. Anthony Jones- 426, vs. Azumah Nelson-464...also landed 390 in Ramirez rematch win.)

WORLD CHAMPION

GREATEST HITS: TIM BRADLEY

ON HIS WAY TO WINNING TITLES IN TWO DIVISIONS, BRADLEY PROVED AGAIN AND AGAIN – EVEN WHEN IT SEEMED THE WORLD WAS AGAINST HIM – THAT HE BELONGED AMONG THE BEST

By **Anson Wainwright**

No fighter worked harder than Tim Bradley. Whether it was between fights or between the ropes, his determination to shine would steer his career from humble beginnings all the way to the pinnacle of the sport.

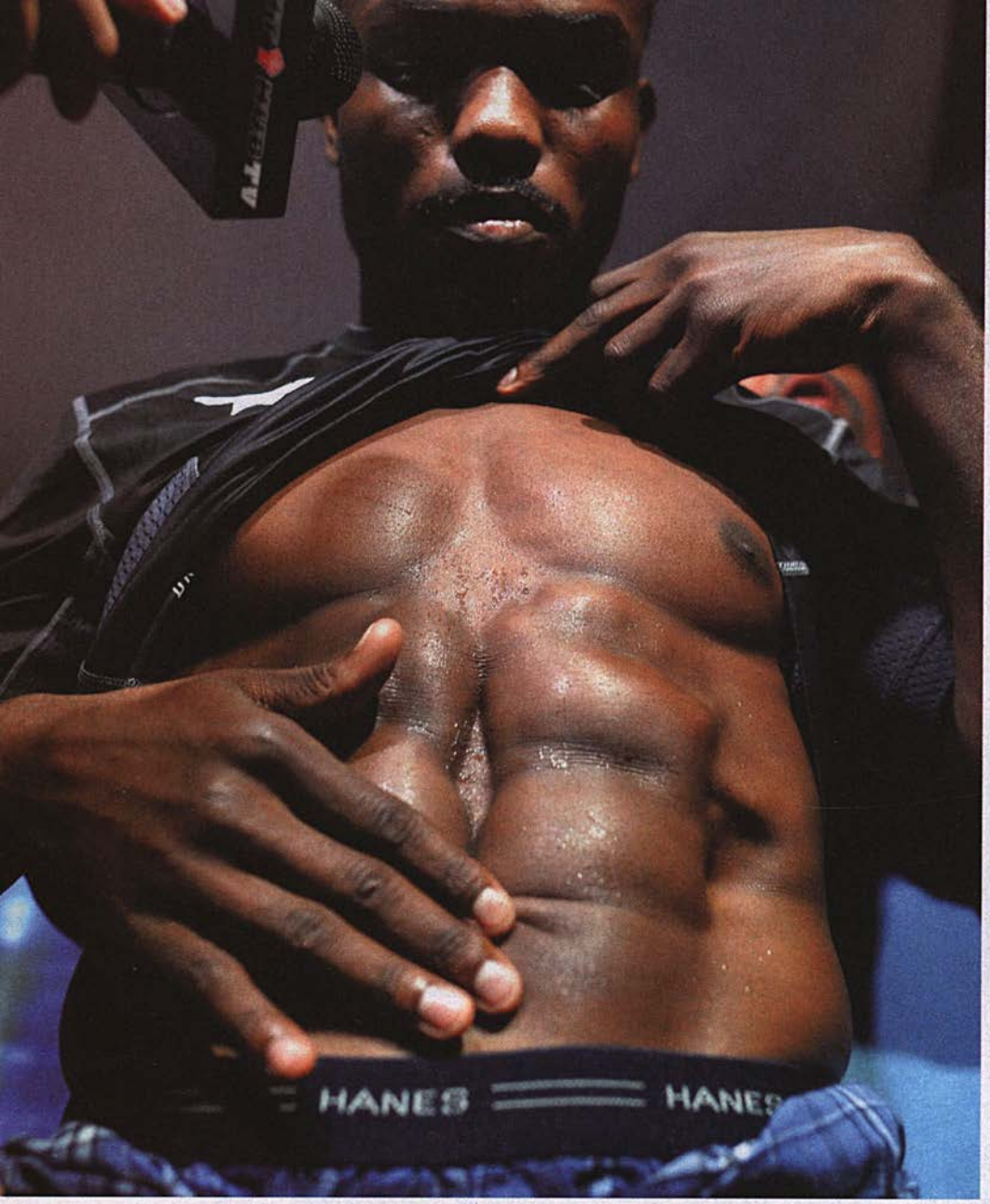
Bradley was born in Palm Springs, California, the middle child in a working-class family, on August 29, 1983. Although Palm Springs is known for being the golf capital of the world, its country clubs and affluent lifestyles, Bradley's formative years were spent apart from such lavish things.

"There's a ghetto in every place," Bradley told The Ring. "There were drugs, one particular gang in the area. I've seen shootings. You name it, I've seen it all – at a young age."

Despite having positive role models in his churchgoing parents, the hot-headed Bradley was often involved in trouble as a child. He got kicked out of school in the second and fourth grade for fighting.

When Bradley was 10, his father took him to Palm Springs Boxing Club, a small local gym, to channel his aggression.

"Honestly, to me, it was like heaven. It was my sanctuary," said Bradley, who started doing pull-ups when he was 5 and lifting weights, copying his father, who



Bradley worked hard to maintain an exceptional physique.

was a powerlifter, from the age of 8. "I was already an active and physical person. I was rugged and rough. So walking in the gym, it was like a kid walking into a store full of candy."

He settled into gym life quickly. He was always the first to arrive and last to leave.

"I was like one of those kids that plays basketball and always carries a basketball and is always dribbling. That was me with boxing," he said, laughing. "I was working on my art, trying to perfect my craft, trying to get better. Boxing was on my mind every second of the day."

Three weeks after first stepping into the gym, Bradley had his first amateur fight. He went on to win two national titles but lost at the 2004 Olympic trials to Vanes Martirosyan and turned professional in the summer of 2004.

Bradley toiled in near-anonymity for the first couple of years, never fighting outside of Southern California, but steadily moved through the ranks as his confidence grew.

He was given the opportunity to face former lightweight titleholder Jose Luis Castillo as chief support to Juan Diaz-Nate Campbell in March 2008, but Castillo missed weight and the fight was called off. It turned out to be a watershed moment. Then-WBC President Jose Sulaiman recognized Bradley's efforts and just two months later, he was heading to Nottingham, England, to face WBC 140-pound titlist Junior Witter.

Bradley made the most of his opportunity, taking over in the second half of the fight to win by split decision.

"That was the birth of my professional career," he said. "That put the whole boxing world on notice. That was a belt [that] changed my whole career. That was instant gratification for me."

The California native isn't one to settle, however, and he yearned for more. He got it when he bested Kendall Holt to add the WBO belt to his collection. "Desert Storm" then established himself as the premier junior welterweight in the world by beating Devon Alexander (the third undefeated fighter in a row to lose their perfect record against Bradley) in January 2011.

Bradley moved up to welterweight and secured his legacy by edging Manny Pacquiao in a controversial split decision but would lose to the Filipino icon in two subsequent fights. He also owns a win over Hall of Famer Juan Manuel Marquez (SD 12).

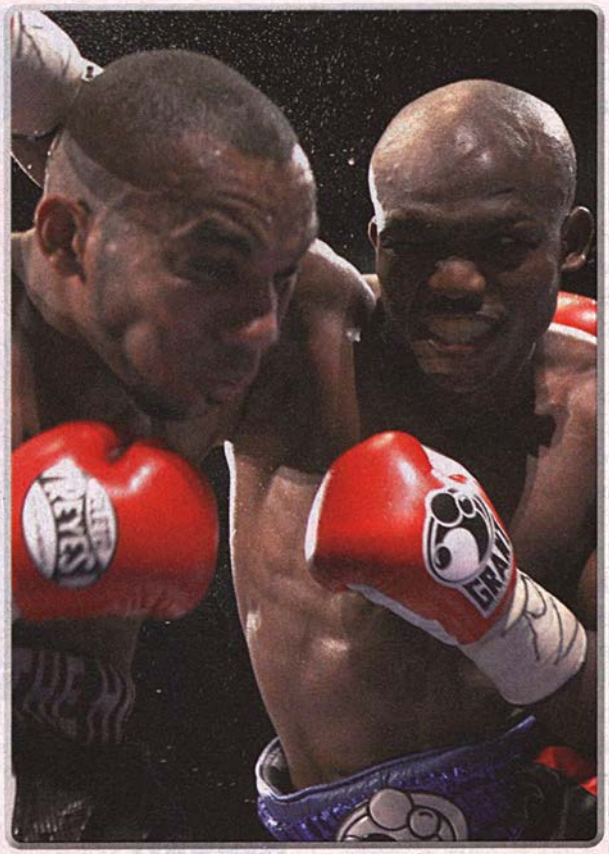
The likable Bradley retired with a record of 33-2-1 (13 knockouts) in the summer of 2017.

Bradley, now 38, and his wife, Monica, have five children and live in Rancho Mirage, California. Bradley works as a color commentator for ESPN.

Here's what he had to say about six of his most memorable nights in the ring:

JUNIOR WITTER

May 10, 2008, Nottingham Arena, Nottingham, England
• Titles: WBC junior welterweight



"I've always had my eye on every fighter who was from 135 to 147 pounds. I studied the game. I watched Junior Witter late at night just to find a weakness, because I knew someday I was going to face him. And I did that for a year straight. I drove my wife mad, because she would wake up and I'm up at 3 a.m. watching Junior Witter fight.

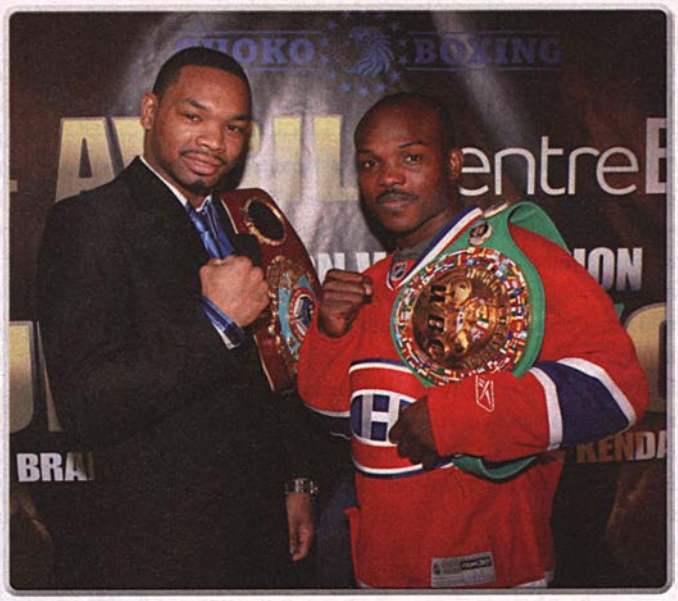
"It wasn't for a while before I really found a weakness. He was a tricky fighter. He was a switch-hitter; he had power in both hands. He had really good speed. He had great reflexes. He threw punches at the oddest angles – he was very creative with his offense. I came up with a game plan, and I wanted to turn it on in the second half. I noticed Witter faded late in the second half of fights.

"After the fifth round, you hear my trainer (Joel Diaz) say, 'It's time to turn it up. Loop the overhand right over the top. He's there to be hit.' It's the perfect game plan. I knew I had to do something dramatic. I knew the first six were very, very close. Once we scored the knockdown [in Round 6], my morale and confidence went up. I went on the attack and backed him up. I pushed the pace. I wanted to show the judges I was in charge."

RESULT: BRADLEY SD 12

KENDALL HOLT

April 4, 2009, Bell Centre, Montreal, Canada
• Titles: WBC/WBO junior welterweight



"I went to Atlantic City and I saw Kendall Holt fight against Demetrius Hopkins live. After watching him fight, I was highly impressed. I knew the fight was a dangerous fight. To be the best, you've got to beat the best. I had one title defense and now I'm having a unification match against Kendall Holt. I was possibly outgunned, he had the bigger punches, he had hand speed, he had great boxing ability, more experience than I have.

"I changed a few things. My running – I didn't do any long-distance running for this camp. I knew I had to push the pace and take more risks than him because he had the longer reach. I knew I had to outwill him. I had to be gutsy and ballsy.

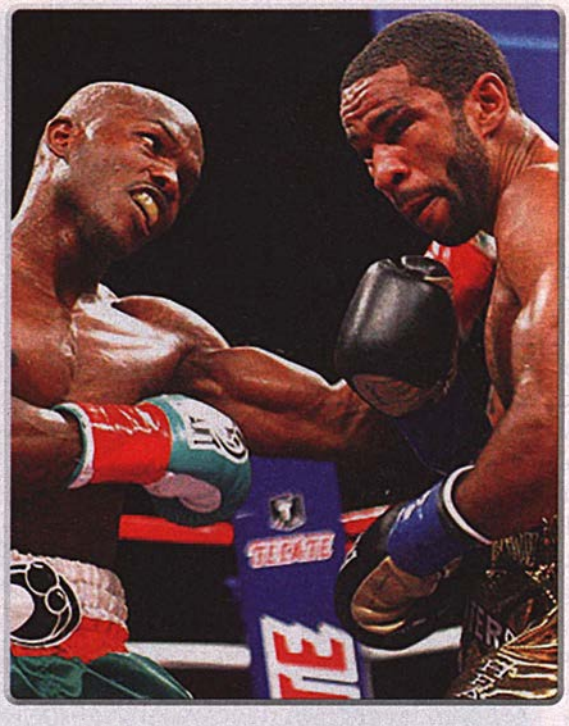
"That was the first time I experienced a guy talking trash to me; it was a rude awakening for me and I fell right into the trap where he wanted me to be, and that's the reason why he caught me with that shotgun left hook in the first round. I was out when he hit me and the ground woke me up. I stood up quickly; my leg was numb and my head was ringing. I'm thinking, 'It's time for me to survive.' I started moving; my footing was a little off. I cleared my head. I was able to survive that round.

"I made my mind up. I said, 'If I lose, I'm going out on my shield. I'm going to be a little bit smarter, but I have to be aggressive.' After that knockdown, I won just about every single round. The 12th, he hit me with an uppercut. My glove touched the canvas. It was a great fight, very entertaining, pure guts and heart, determination and will to win."

RESULT: BRADLEY UD 12

LAMONT PETERSON

December 12, 2009, Agua Caliente Casino Resort Spa, Rancho Mirage, California • Titles: WBO junior welterweight



"Lamont Peterson was undefeated. We knew each other from the amateurs. We never fought in the amateurs because I was always in a heavier weight [class] than he was. I knew him very well – his toughness. He had a ton of skills. It was his time to show the world that he's a better fighter than me at 140 pounds.

"He was with Top Rank at the time. Top Rank matchmakers tell me today they thought they had it easy. They thought they were going to kick my behind. I definitely showed a different wrinkle: I showed I can box. A lot of my fights, I'm the aggressor. I liked to come forward. I'm always the shorter guy. I had decent hand speed and foot speed. I had a really high I.Q. and I was able to read fighters.

"I chose to stand and trade with Lamont in the first round. I go back to the corner and my trainer said, 'I want you to switch gears and box,' because he saw how strong Lamont was on the inside. I showed I was more than just a volume puncher, that I was an excellent boxer as well. I felt I was at my very best at that time. My timing was perfect, my speed was on. I felt in tremendous shape.

"Even though it was a boxing lesson, it was a very physical fight. Lamont Peterson banged my body like nobody before. I remember the inside of my body was hot until it was extremely sore and uncomfortable for about a week. He might have bruised my insides."

RESULT: BRADLEY UD 12

MANNY PACQUIAO I

June 9, 2012, MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Titles: WBO welterweight

"Gary Shaw and Thompson Boxing (Bradley's co-promoters) wanted me to face Amir Khan, and I remember I had one more fight left on my contract, but the day they wanted to do the fight was outside the contract. I knew [there] was an opportunity to fight Manny Pacquiao if I got in the right position to do so. Cameron Dunkin (Bradley's manager) did what Cameron Dunkin does. He was a great manager. He told me and my wife to hold out. 'We're going to make a ton of money fighting Pacquiao, and you're going to get your dream.' I either wanted to fight Manny or Floyd Mayweather, because those are two top names in the sport of boxing. Even though Amir Khan was a really good fighter, I wasn't going to get paid life-changing money. If I can put myself in position to fight Manny Pacquiao, who is one of the cash cows in boxing, and also fulfill my dream at the same time, it makes sense. Not fighting Amir Khan was a business move; it wasn't the fact I was scared of him. I wanted to kick his ass. The holdout worked out perfectly. I had to pay some money out to the promoter, my contract was released and I ended up signing with Top Rank. Negotiations with Pacquiao immediately started. They told me the minimum Pacquiao would pay me was $5 million. I thought that was astronomical, because the most I had made at that time in my career was $750,000 when I faced Carlos Abregu.

"It was my opportunity to start my legacy. I ran 8-10 miles every day. I sparred more. I probably left a quarter or half of the fight in the gym. It was the most promotion that I had to do; we did commercials, advertising and previews. That was stressful. It was pay-per-view. This is the pinnacle of boxing. We're fighting at MGM, Las Vegas – my face was on the side of the building. Interview after interview, it was mentally draining. This was nothing new for Manny Pacquiao; he's already been through this. It was all new to me.

"Walking out, I can barely feel my legs. I get into the ring ... and through the whole week, Pacquiao had been extremely nice. He looked small at the weigh-in. And they took the robe off him and I was like, 'Oh my gosh! This is not the same dude!' (laughs) He was twice the size. I knew right away this guy meant business.

"Still, I can't feel my legs. I walk to the center of the ring, hear the instructions, touch gloves, go back to the corner ... at that point I'm all alone. As soon as I hear the ding ding, my nerves went by the wayside. I was sharp. I felt great; everything was going great. I felt like I belonged. Any time Pacquiao struck, I came right back. I had to.

"I hear the first scorecard: 113-115 (for Pacquiao). I knew the fight was close. Then I heard the other way for me. I knew I had won the fight. Then, boom, the third card came in. Hallelujah! That was a changing point in my life. It was the biggest accomplishment I was ever able to accomplish in my career, but it was probably the worst moment of my life."

[Editor's note: The result was seen as controversial and angered some fans to the point that Bradley received death threats.]

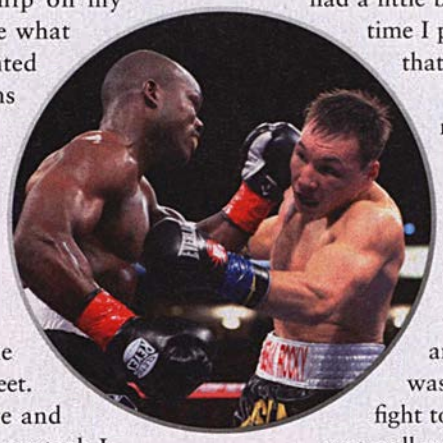
RESULT: BRADLEY SD 12

RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV

March 16, 2013, Home Depot Center, Carson, California • Titles: WBO welterweight

"After the Pacquiao fight, I was depressed. I ballooned up in weight; I was probably 190 pounds and had to go down and make 147 pounds. I struggled the last week to make weight. The day of the weigh-in, I had to drop 12 pounds.

"I think I had more than a chip on my shoulder. I needed everybody to see what I had inside of me. That's all I wanted to prove, win or lose. My intentions were to box, but I would stand and exchange because I felt boxing wasn't good enough. Provodnikov was strong, he was game. He punched hard with both hands. He had a great night.



"I was concussed from the first round on. There was one time in the sixth round where I was out on my feet. I said, 'What the hell.' I stood there and went toe-to-toe with him. I had no control; I was just fighting back. I said, 'If I'm going to go out, I'm going out on my shield.'

"The 12th round, all I had to do was move and box. I was exhausted, he was exhausted. I felt him coming on strong; he caught me with a big shot. I felt myself fading. I knew all he had to do was land one more shot before he knocked me out. I took that knee. I took the eight count, just to buy myself some time. I did that and got through the round.

"Looking back at the fight, I don't know how the hell I got through it. After the fight, I had no clue what happened. Days afterwards, I started recalling events from the fight. I had a little bit of amnesia after the fight. It was the first time I pissed blood. I took so much trauma during that fight just to prove to the fans.

"Fighting the way I did is when I pretty much restarted my career again. People gave me my respect; people started to believe in me again. I showed what I was made of. The Provodnikov fight was definitely redemption. But it was hell, too, at the same damn time.

"It's a fight a lot of people remember over any other victory I've had. It was a classic. It was a war. I have no regrets. The Provodnikov fight took some years off my life and career, but it was well worth it to me. If I had to go back and do it all over again, I probably would."

RESULT: BRADLEY UD 12

JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ

October 12, 2013, Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas • Titles: WBO welterweight

"After the Ruslan fight, my speech was slightly slurred, my balance was off, my coordination was off. I was having headaches. I was going through some physical changes due to the trauma I suffered in that fight. My wife sought out some help. I went to Pittsburgh to see a concussion specialist and did some tests and got some treatment and saw a neuro specialist in Long Beach and also New York. I reached out to a physical therapist in New York to help me get my senses back.

"[The Marquez fight] was my wife's plan. I wanted to fight Manny Pacquiao [again]. My wife was my manager at this time, and we sat down with (Top Rank president) Todd duBoef. She said, 'Let's do the Marquez fight and Pacquiao will be here after this.' Todd looked at us like we were both insanely crazy: 'This man just knocked out Pacquiao and you want to fight him?'

"I had fear because this guy had just flattened Pacquiao. It made me train smart. I had to be what I needed to be to beat him, and that's a disciplined boxer.

"I knew Marquez wouldn't abandon his base and balance for offense; he's a guy that likes to be set and a guy that likes to punch hard. I knew I had to pick up my feet, keep moving. I knew I was quicker than he was. I had to counter the counters. Guys at the higher level, they tend to look to counter just about every single punch. I knew Marquez was a great counterpuncher. I would start the action, he would come back, and then I had to finish the action. And then I move, he has to pick up his feet, reset before he punches. I knew I had the advantage. I played the cat and mouse game with him. It was a really easy night for me. I always tell people: No disrespect to Marquez, [but] that was the easiest $4 million I ever made in my life."

RESULT: BRADLEY SD 12

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk, and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

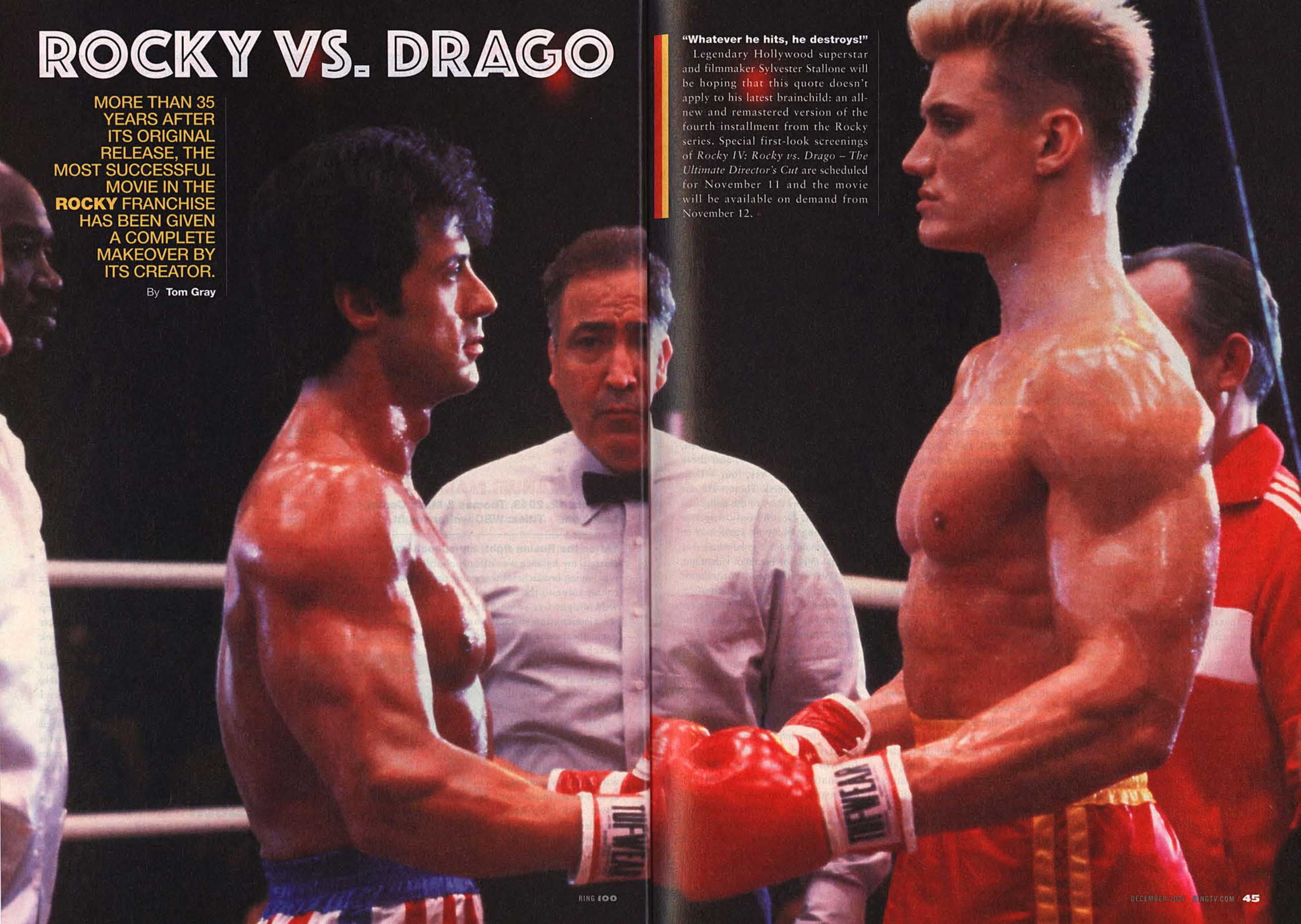
ROCKY VS. DRAGO

MORE THAN 35 YEARS AFTER ITS ORIGINAL RELEASE, THE MOST SUCCESSFUL MOVIE IN THE **ROCKY** FRANCHISE HAS BEEN GIVEN A COMPLETE MAKEOVER BY ITS CREATOR.

By **Tom Gray**

"Whatever he hits, he destroys!"

Legendary Hollywood superstar and filmmaker Sylvester Stallone will be hoping that this quote doesn't apply to his latest brainchild: an all-new and remastered version of the fourth installment from the Rocky series. Special first-look screenings of *Rocky IV: Rocky vs. Drago – The Ultimate Director's Cut* are scheduled for November 11 and the movie will be available on demand from November 12.



Fans will get to see more of the iconic Rocky vs. Drago finale.

What can fans expect? After falling short in securing an interview with Stallone himself, I was advised to reach out to MGM Studios, which kindly supplied a working synopsis. This new version of the 1985 blockbuster will feature over 40 minutes of never-before-seen footage, which is substantial given that the original release ran just 91 minutes total.

Over the past several months, Stallone, 75, has teased fans on Instagram with unseen fight choreography featuring himself, Carl Weathers (Apollo Creed) and Dolph Lundgren (Ivan Drago). The long-lost sequence where a boxing commission refuses to sanction the Balboa-Drago showdown following Creed's demise – a clip of which is included in the original trailer – has also been rediscovered. Oh, and Paulie's (Burt Young's) robot is being KO'd from the entire movie, with its inventor recently stating that this particular maneuver is royalty-related. Other changes have yet to be announced.

But why has *Rocky IV* been selected for a redux? Why does this particular sequel resonate so much with fans of the series and its creator?

In early 1986, as a 10-year-old, I attended a showing of the movie at the now-demolished Hamilton Odeon cinema in the West of Scotland with a family friend. I wasn't a boxing fan then. In fact, I barely qualified as a Rocky fan, having only seen the first two movies while inexplicably ignoring part three (later to emerge as my favorite).

There was a stark difference between the first two installments and *Rocky IV*. The Oscar-winning original and its first sequel shared an identical cinematic tapestry, with both movies taking place almost exclusively in Philadelphia. However, this movie was beyond bombastic, with neon-filled Las Vegas and the then-Soviet Union (OK, the snowy mountaintop scenes were shot in Wyoming) serving as locales for propaganda-loaded power punches. This was during the time of the Cold War, and if England's James Bond could beat the Russians, so too could the all-American Rocky. Stallone viewed his character as "an international ambassador."

Did the narrative work?

By the end of that movie, over 100 people inside the cinema I was attending – adults and children – were on their feet, chanting the name of a fictitious character who they knew was going to win before they'd bought their popcorn. Possessed with a finely tuned cringe detector, even at that age, I didn't join in with the chaos, but it's a moment from my childhood that I'll never forget. It was the most visceral reaction I've ever seen from a cinema audience, and Rocky fever was maintained for months afterward. Why? In the mid-1980s, there was no Netflix, no Amazon Prime ... hell, there was no cable TV, and there were only four – yes, four – U.K. terrestrial channels. These were not the throwaway days of the millennial generation. No, the only way you were seeing *Rocky IV* again was to wait six months for it to be released as a rental (VHS or Betamax videotape, not DVD or Blu-ray). You cannot overstate the sense of anticipation that schoolkids had while waiting for that movie to be released on home video, and many of us rented it every other week until the quality looked as beaten up as Rocky did post-fight.

And if you were a *Rocky IV* superfreak, then the soundtrack – paradoxically timeless despite its unapologetic '80s vibe – came hand in hand. In what is perhaps the most popular workout soundtrack ever, Survivor's 1982 hit "Eye of the Tiger," originally written for *Rocky III*, was reprised in the movie's opening; James Brown's unforgettable single "Living in America" was used for the patriotic Creed's swanky ring entrance; "No Easy Way Out," written by Robert Tepper, accompanied

Rocky's trip down memory lane in a black Lamborghini Jalpa; "Burning Heart," again by Survivor, was used for Rocky's voyage to the U.S.S.R. and John Cafferty's "Hearts on Fire" played over the final training montage.

The training scenes are perhaps the most memorable parts of *Rocky IV*. The juxtaposition between Rocky's old-school approach – log carrying, horse carriage lifting, dogsled bear crawls – and Drago's high-tech, state-of-the-art training facility was a work of genius for its time. Drago runs on a treadmill? Rocky runs up a mountain. Drago chops down sparring partners? "The Italian Stallion" chops down trees. Hopefully, Stallone won't have tampered with these sequences, because fans of the series are likely to be protective.

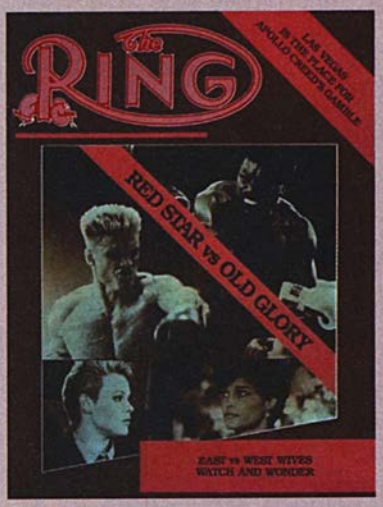
Rocky IV also predicted the future of boxing in a variety of ways. The use of performance-enhancing drugs in sports didn't enter the public conscience until Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson tested positive for an anabolic steroid (stanozolol) following his infamous 100-meter win at the 1988 Olympic finals in Seoul. In boxing, PED use was all but unheard of when the fictional Drago took the needle, but over 35 years later it's perhaps the most damaging specter hovering over the sport.

On a more innocent note, Apollo's ring entrance looked over the top in 1985, but that kind of campy showmanship was almost expected by the time Tyson Fury mimicked the scene in his Las Vegas debut almost 35 years later. The legacy of *Rocky IV* was front and center in Fury's tribute and probably inspired such ring extroverts as Hector Camacho and Prince Naseem Hamed in prior decades.

The movie also foreshadowed the emergence of the modern-day heavyweight and a long period of Eastern European domination. In the mid-1980s, the heavyweight landscape was exclusively dominated by African Americans who weighed roughly 220 pounds – think Larry Holmes and Mike Tyson. A decade later, heavyweights were much taller and weighed approximately 250 pounds (Drago was 261). When British great Lennox Lewis retired in 2004, Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko, brothers who hailed from the former Soviet Union, flew the flag for Ukraine and dominated the heavyweight ranks. Both were considerably more personable than Drago but pulverized opponents for over a decade, and playful impressions of them were almost sure to include the line "I must break you."

So, will this new version of *Rocky IV* be a success? While Stallone can bomb when attempting to sing with Dolly Parton in *Rhinestone* or flop when he's trying to be funny alongside Estelle Getty in *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot*, he frequently knocks it out of the park when it comes to the action genre. Unlike his untimely attempt at regurgitating John Rambo for yet another sequel in 2019, this is an innovative idea by the veteran action icon. For the most part, director's cuts are reserved for critically acclaimed works such as *Once Upon a Time in America*, *Apocalypse Now* and *Blade Runner*. *Rocky IV* was never intended to be an award winner; it was intended to be a solid piece of entertainment and escapism. Some reviews were scathing, but the film turned in a worldwide gross of $300 million, making it the most successful movie in the series, and that includes the *Creed* spin-offs. Stallone is immortalized in *Rocky IV*, preserved in cinematic ice, and this pre-40 version of him is what fans want to see. Wouldn't it have been terrific if Evander Holyfield could have resurrected a 39-year-old version of himself to fight Vitor Belfort instead of struggling up the ring steps as a 58-year-old and succumbing to a first-round stoppage? If only one could bottle that Hollywood magic dust. Rocky vs. Drago, a fictional matchup that took place one year after Holyfield claimed Olympic bronze, is likely to be a huge success.

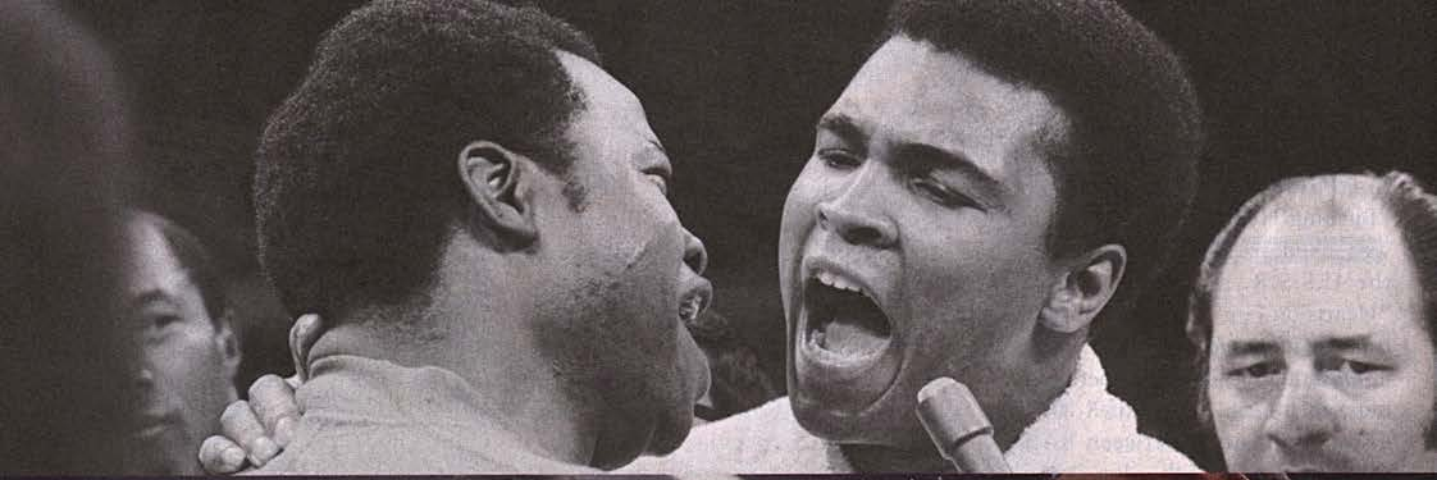
Only in America!

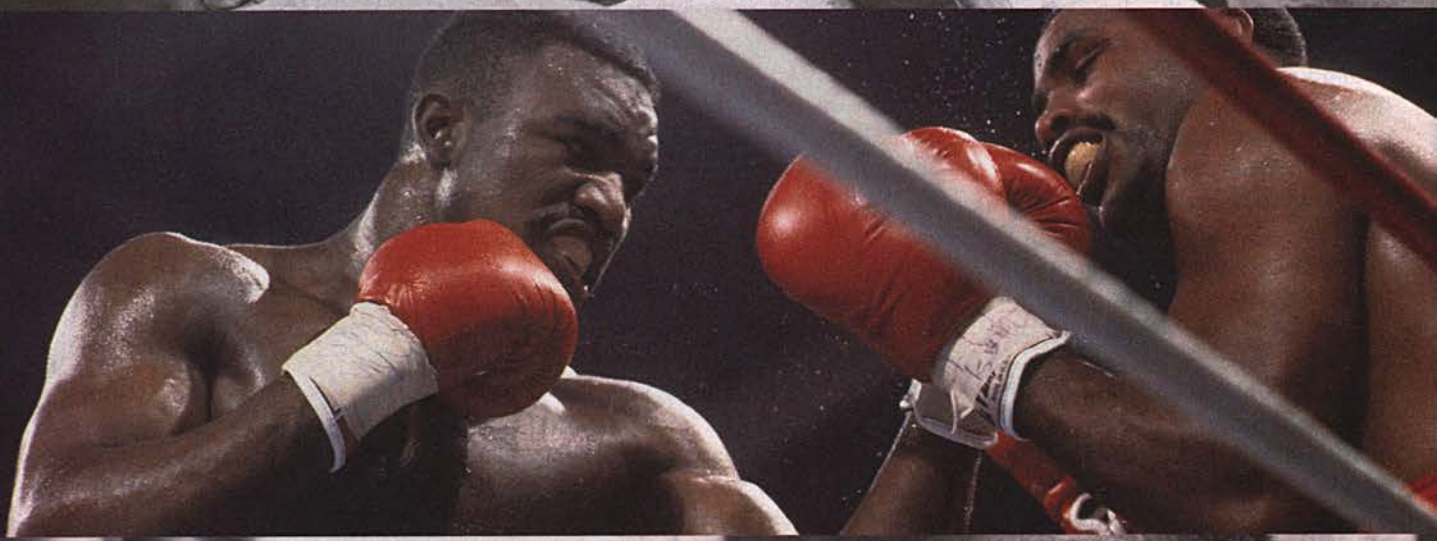


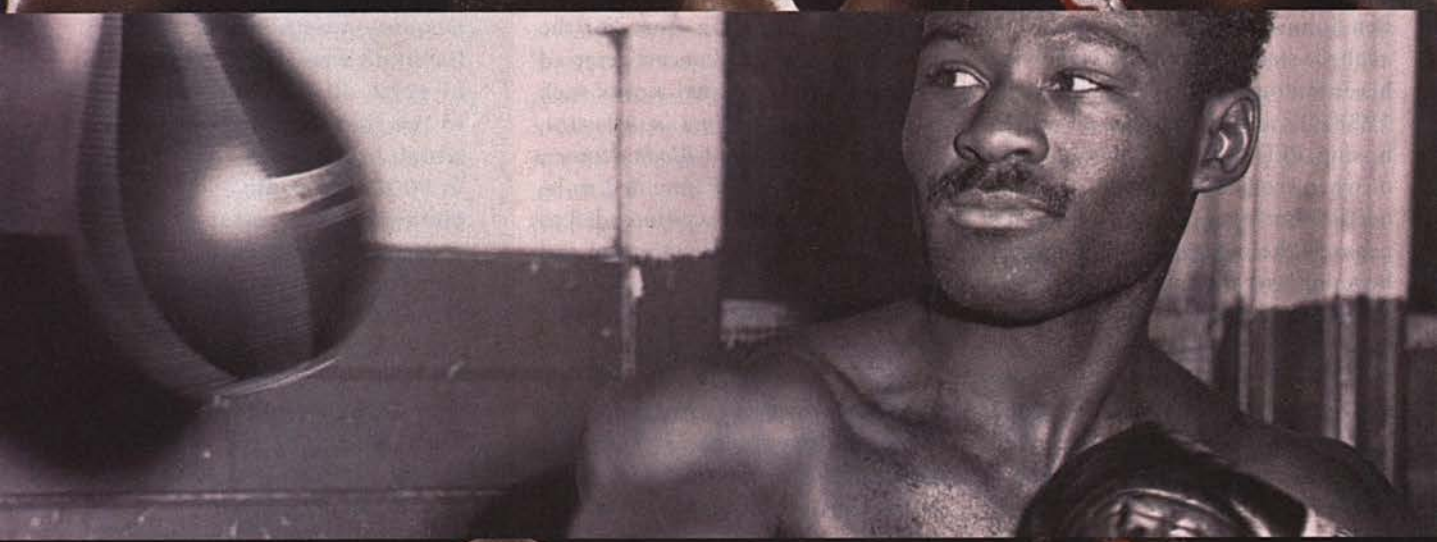
A SEQUEL-WORTHY CHAMPIONSHIP BELT

The Ring has a special relationship with the Rocky franchise. Beginning with Rocky II, which was released in 1979, all the way up to the fifth installment, which hit screens in 1990, an iconic championship belt is often prevalent. This composite piece actually features a fraction of the design work used for the Police Gazette belt – created in the 19th century as an award for bare-knuckle practitioners – but it carries the Ring Magazine logo, traditional inscribing and colors. Specially created Ring Magazine covers also appeared in three of the Rocky sequels (III, IV and V).

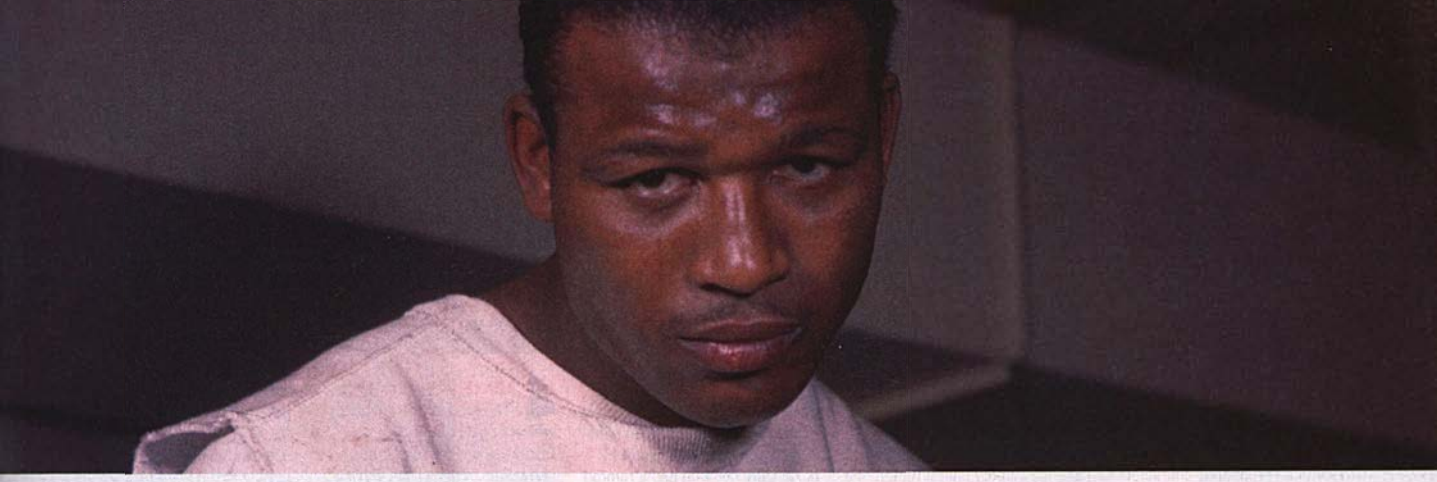
Tom Gray is Managing Editor for Ring Magazine. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.







JONES JR.



DIVISION BY DIVISION: THE GREATEST FIGHTERS OF ALL TIME

A PANEL OF HISTORY-MINDED EDITORS, SCRIBES AND PUNDITS CONTRIBUTED THEIR TOP FIVE FIGHTERS IN ALL 17 OF THE MODERN WEIGHT CLASSES TO DETERMINE THE BEST OF THE BEST IN EACH DIVISION

By **Anson Wainwright**

Boxing as we know it has been around since the Queensberry rules came into place in 1867. However, it wasn't until 1903 that all eight of the original weight classes – flyweight, bantamweight, featherweight, lightweight, welterweight, middleweight, light heavyweight and heavyweight – were firmly established.

With the advent of "junior" and "super" weight classes over the decades, the number gradually expanded from eight to 17 – possibly 18 if the WBC's fledgling bridgerweight gets off the ground – and while that's way too many in the opinion of boxing purists, we have also witnessed a plethora of outstanding fighters occupy each division.

As a teenager, this writer was captivated by the cover feature for the May 1994 issue – entitled "Division-by-Division: The Greatest Fighters of All-Time," penned by then-Editor-In-Chief Steve Farhood – and, as an adult, I wondered just how things would look in each weight class over a quarter of a century later.

To single out and rank the best fighters of all time in every division is a very difficult and subjective task. The Ring enlisted the services of various historians and writers, including Farhood, current Editor-In-Chief Doug Fischer, Managing Editor Tom Gray, Lee Groves, Stephen Edwards, Cliff Rold, Bob Yalen and myself.

I reached out to each of the panel and asked them for their top five in each division. Once I had everyone's compilations, I assigned five points for the No. 1 selections, four points for No. 2, three points for No. 3 and so on, then totaled up everyone's scores.

If you're curious about the all-time top five rankings of each individual panelist, visit our website for an expanded article that will include that information. Use the direct link – bit.ly/division-greatest – or scan the QR code at left.

In the meantime, enjoy the overview of each weight class and let the debate begin.»

HEAVYWEIGHT

1 MUHAMMAD ALI

Claimed he was "The Greatest" and lived up to his lofty billing, transcending boxing and sports... A gregarious character blessed with it all, Ali won gold at the 1960 Olympics in the light heavyweight division... Beat the feared Sonny Liston (TKO 7) as an underdog to claim the heavyweight title in 1964... Made nine defenses before a three-year hiatus due to political stance... Returned and lost to Joe Frazier (UD 15) but beat his great rival twice (UD 12, TKO 14)... Shockingly upset George Foreman (TKO 8) to regain the title in 1974... First three-time heavyweight champion.

2 JOE LOUIS

"The Brown Bomber" holds the record for the most consecutive title defenses (25) and the longest uninterrupted title reign (11 years and 7 months)... Level of opposition wasn't always stellar, but he often dominated and did beat worthy challengers after unseating James J. Braddock (TKO 8) for the title, including a satisfying rematch demolition of Max Schmeling (KO 1), the only man to beat him during his prime... Was brutally efficient in rematches against Arturo Godoy, Buddy Baer, Billy Conn and Jersey Joe Walcott... Better numbers than Ali, but The Greatest fought a better level of opposition.

3 LARRY HOLMES

Hall of Fame title reign followed Ali's and preceded Mike Tyson's emergence... Excellent boxer-puncher who had a ramrod jab and champion's heart... Won the WBC title with an epic split decision win over Ken Norton in 1978 at 28, missing the prime Ali, Joe Frazier and George Foreman... Reigned for seven years, making 20 defenses... Beat his hero, a badly faded Ali (TKO 10) and several undefeated young guns, including Gerry Cooney (TKO 13), Tim Witherspoon (SD 15) and Carl Williams (UD 15)... Lost the title to Michael Spinks (UD 15) just one win away from equaling Rocky Marciano's 49-0 record.

4 LENNOX LEWIS

The erudite British fighter, who won gold at the 1988 Olympics, was the leader of a new generation of bigger-but-athletic heavyweights... Skills and power in abundance, picked up the WBC title after Olympic finals rival Riddick Bowe dumped the belt... Defeated the top contenders of the 1990s, including Razor Ruddock (TKO 2), Frank Bruno (TKO 7), Tommy Morrison (TKO 6), Ray Mercer (UD 10), Andrew Golota (KO 1) and David Tua (UD 12)... Impressive performances against Evander Holyfield (D 12/ UD 12) and Mike Tyson (TKO 8) came after former champs' primes... KO losses to Oliver McCall and Hasim Rahman hurt his standing, but rematch victories proved his mettle... Beat every fighter he faced... Made 14 defenses over three title reigns before retiring as champion.

5 JACK JOHNSON

Had to wait for a shot at the title when then-champion James J. Jeffries refused to face him... Later became the first African American heavyweight champion when granted a title shot vs. Tommy Burns in Sydney, Australia... Held the title for seven years after his one-sided beating of Burns was halted by the police during the 14th round... Eight defenses followed, including one against friend and middleweight champion Stanley Ketchel (KO 12) and a faded, out-of-retirement Jeffries, dubbed the "Great White Hope" going into the racially charged "Fight of the Century," who was battered and stopped in 15 rounds... Hugely famous, infamous and polarizing during his era.

A NOTCH BELOW: George Foreman, Jack Dempsey, Rocky Marciano, Evander Holyfield

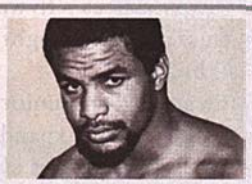
CRUISERWEIGHT

1 EVANDER HOLYFIELD

The only undisputed cruiserweight and heavyweight champion... Turned professional after winning bronze at the 1984 Olympics as a light heavyweight... Grew into the cruiserweight division (190-pound limit at the time) and edged WBA titlholder Dwight Muhammad Qawi (SD 15) in the first great fight of the new division... Made five defenses, which included Ricky Parkey (KO 3) for the IBF title, Qawi (KO 4) in a rematch, and Carlos De Leon (TKO 8) for the WBC belt.

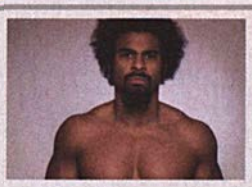
2 OLEKSANDR USYK

Claimed gold at the 2012 Olympics in the heavyweight (201-pound) division... Proved to be a road warrior, besting top opposition in their homelands, including Krzysztof Glowacki (UD 12) in Poland for the WBO belt, Michael Hunter (UD 12) in the U.S., Marco Huck (TKO 10) in Germany, Mairis Briedis (MD 12) in Latvia for the WBC title and a near shutout over Murat Gassiev (UD 12) in Russia to become the undisputed Ring Magazine champion... Ended championship tenure with win vs. Tony Bellew (KO 8) in England... The only real challenger to Holyfield as the top fighter in the division's history.



3 CARLOS DE LEON

The talented Puerto Rican was a four-time WBC titleholder and two-time Ring champion in the 1980s... Loss to S. T. Gordon (TKO 2) hurts standing, but he beat the big puncher in a rematch (UD 12)... A mainstay in the division throughout the 1980s, but his chin let him down on occasion.



4 DAVID HAYE

A real gunslinger in his early days, which cost him against Carl Thompson, who handed him his first loss via fifth-round stoppage... To his credit, he came back well to win the European title with a demolition of Alexander Gurov (KO 1)... Crossed The Channel to face Ring/WBA/WBC champ Jean-Marc Mormeck and recovered from a slow start to stop the Frenchman (TKO 7)... Added the WBO title when he stopped Enzo Maccarinelli (TKO 2)... Vacated to move up to heavyweight, where he also enjoyed success.

5 JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ

A Cuban amateur standout who headed to Germany to live and fight as a professional... Active and dominant during a three-year reign, made 10 defenses of the WBC title before vacating to move up to heavyweight... Solid but unspectacular list of opponents, but none came close to beating him... Shame he wasn't able to unify titles with either Johnny Nelson or Vassiliy Jirov.

A NOTCH BELOW: Johnny Nelson, James Toney, Vassiliy Jirov, Dwight Muhammad Qawi, Jean-Marc Mormeck

ALL PHOTO ARCHIVES

The Greatest's unmatched resume almost guaranteed him the No. 1 spot within the sport's glamour division.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

1 EZZARD CHARLES

"The Cincinnati Cobra" is widely considered the premier fighter in the division's long and illustrious history despite never winning the world title... Was as slick as he was tough and very capable defensively... Charles beat the best 175-pounders of his time, including Archie Moore, Joey Maxim, Jimmy Bivins and Lloyd Marshall... What helps separate him from other light heavyweight greats is that he beat Moore in their three fights (UD 10, MD 10, KO 8)... Impressively won and defended the heavyweight title in the late 1940s/early 1950s.

2 ARCHIE MOORE

"The Old Mongoose," who turned pro at middleweight, where he was a top-10 contender for years, didn't get a shot at the title. It wasn't until he was a grizzled 36-year-old veteran (according to BoxRec and Wikipedia; according to The Ring and the Boxing Register record books, his title shot came four days after his 39th birthday)... Beat Joey Maxim (UD 15), who was coming off a win over Sugar Ray Robinson, for the 175-pound title and reigned until he was 45 (or 48, depending on your source)... Defended the title vs. Maxim (UD 15), Harold Johnson (TKO 14), Bobo Olson (KO 3) and Yvon Durelle (KO 11/KO 3). Incredible power earned him 132 career knockouts (131 according to the Boxing Register).

3 BOB FOSTER

Possessed daunting height (6-foot-3) and reach (79 inches) that kept opponents on the outside and in the line of his fearsome power punches... Brutally knocked out two-division champ Dick Tiger (KO 4) to become undisputed champion in 1968... Made a then-division record of 14 defenses, 10 by stoppage... scored impressive title-defense knockouts against top contender Andy Kendall (TKO 4), WBA titleholder Vicente Rondon (KO 2) and unbeaten (35-0) Mike Quarry (KO 4), which was particularly chilling… Yearned to be heavyweight champion but lacked the size. He was unsuccessful against Joe Frazier (KO 2) and Muhammad Ali (KO 8).

4 MICHEAL SPINKS

Claimed gold at the 1976 Olympics and rapidly made his way up the ranks with the goal of unifying the WBA and WBC titles, which had remained separate since Foster's retirement... Beat good opposition, including Yaqui Lopez and Marvin Johnson, during his march to coronation against WBA titleholder Eddie Mustafa Muhammad (UD 15) in the summer of 1981... Made 10 defenses over a four-year period... Most notably outpointed Dwight Muhammad Qawi (UD 15) to add Ring and WBC championships to his collection... Retired as undisputed champ and made history by beating Larry Holmes for the Ring and IBF heavyweight titles.

5 GENE TUNNEY

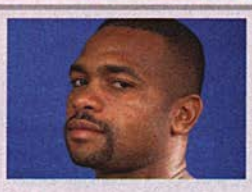
"The Fighting Marine" served in World War I... Known for his late-career surge at heavyweight, however, he excelled at 175 pounds... Beat Battling Levinsky (PTS 12) for the U.S. title... Impressively beat future middleweight champion Harry Greb in three of their four meetings at light heavyweight... Could also boast wins over Georges Carpentier (TKO 15) and Tommy Gibbons (KO 12).

A NOTCH BELOW: Roy Jones Jr., Sam Langford, Tommy Loughran

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

1 JOE CALZAGHE

Quick-fisted Welshman showed championship mettle in his first test, against Chris Eubank (UD 12), which earned him the WBO title in 1997... Compiled 21 defenses, a joint division record he shares with Sven Ottke... Busy southpaw turned back the challenges of Richie Woodhall (TKO 10), Charles Brewer (UD 12) and Byron Mitchell (TKO 2), but he established himself as a future Hall of Famer toward the end of his 10-year reign with masterful performances against the favored Jeff Lacy (UD 12) for the vacant Ring Magazine championship and IBF title, and Mikkel Kessler (UD 12) for the WBC and WBA straps… retired undefeated (46-0).



2 ROY JONES JR.

The IBF middleweight titleholder tested the 168-pound waters against Thulani "Sugar Boy" Malinga (KO 6) in a super middleweight non-title bout... Showed he was a once-in-a-generation talent by dominating unbeaten (44-0-2) IBF super middleweight champ James Toney (UD 12)... Reigned for less than two years, which hurt his chances of being No. 1 in this ranking, but many believe he was untouchable at 168 pounds... Made five defenses, including the blitzing of respected contenders Antoine Byrd (TKO 1) and Tony Thornton (TKO 3).

3 ANDRE WARD

Took time to settle in the professional game after winning gold at the 2004 Olympics... A calculating but tenacious technician and a very good tactical fighter... Beat pre-fight favorite Mikkel Kessler (TD 11) for the WBA title in the first round of the Super Six World Boxing Classic 168-pound tournament... Advanced to the Super Six final by posting near-shutout wins over Allan Green (UD 12), Sakio Bika (UD 12) in an out-of-tournament bout and Arthur Abraham (UD 12)... Widely outpointed Carl Froch (UD 12) in the final to unify WBA/WBC titles and win the vacant Ring Magazine championship... Lured light heavyweight champ Chad Dawson down to 168 pounds, stopping the talented southpaw in 10 rounds.

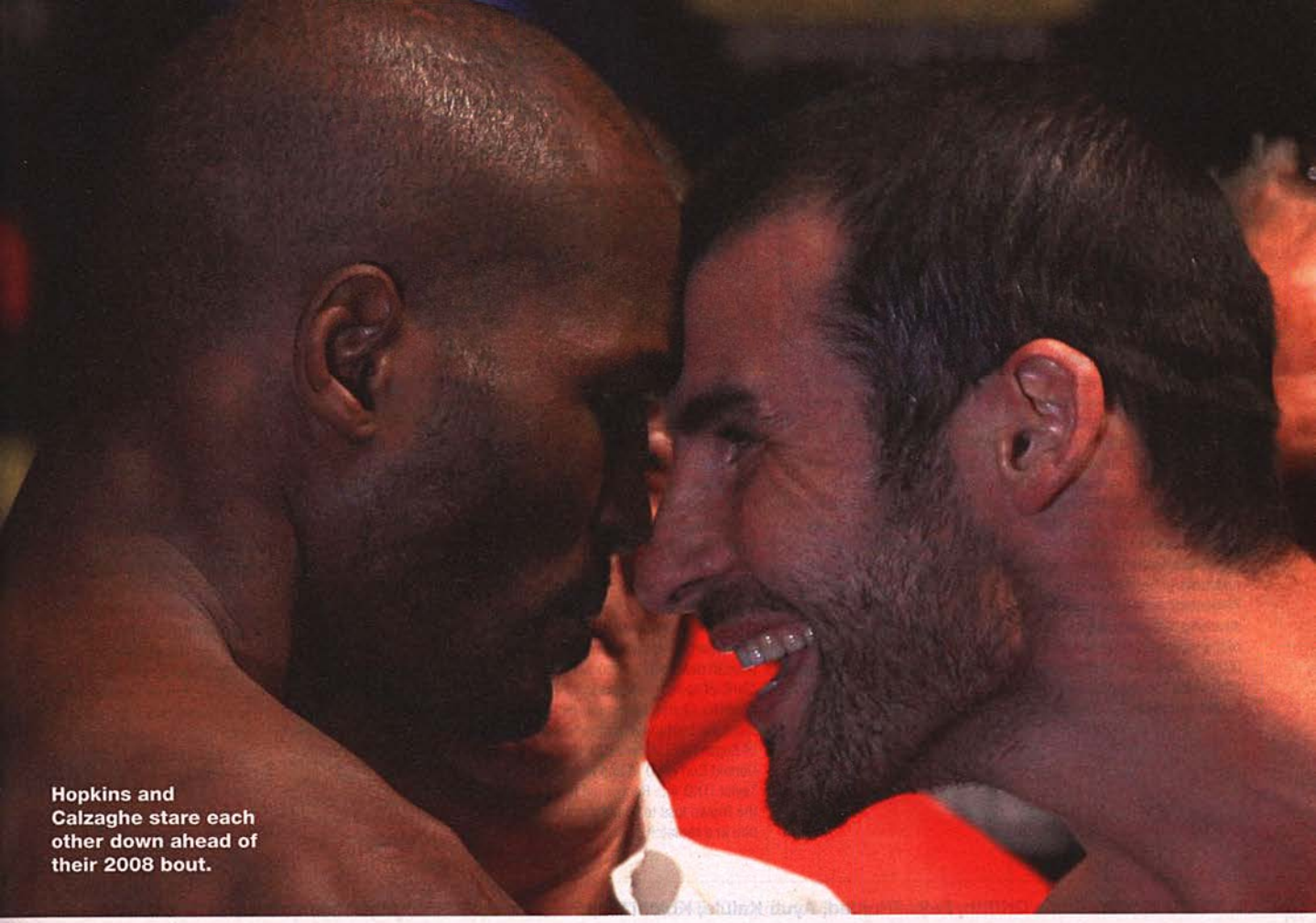
4 JAMES TONEY

Made a name for himself at middleweight, where his IBF title run in 1991 earned him The Ring's Fighter of the Year award, but weight issues forced him to move up... After testing the super middleweight waters against veteran Doug DeWitt (TKO 6), Toney impressively took apart IBF kingpin Iran Barkley (TKO 9) in February 1993... A throwback fighter who lived in the gym and thrived on activity, he fought seven times in 1993, notching a solid win over respected Tony Thornton (UD 12) in his maiden defense. Notched two thrilling defenses, vs. Tim Littles (TKO 4) and Prince Charles Williams (TKO 12), in 1994 before his loss to Jones.

5 CARL FROCH

"The Cobra" was a three-time super middleweight titleholder... Always looked to test himself and fought a murderers' row of opposition... Not as gifted as those above him, but was heavy-handed, iron-jawed, physically strong and disciplined… Used his toughness and underrated skill to beat several world-class fighters, including Jean Pascal (UD 12), Jermain Taylor (TKO 12), Andre Dirrell (SD 12), Lucian Bute (TKO 5), Kessler (UD 12) and George Groves (TKO 9/KO 8).

A NOTCH BELOW: Mikkel Kessler, Sven Ottke, Nigel Benn, Steve Collins, Lucian Bute, Canelo Alvarez



Hopkins and Calzaghe stare each other down ahead of their 2008 bout.

MIDDLEWEIGHT

1 SUGAR RAY ROBINSON

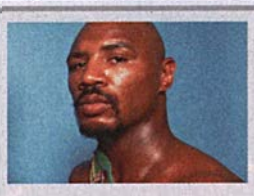
Already viewed as a living legend following his welterweight reign, he added to his mystique by beating archrival Jake LaMotta (TKO 13), his fifth win out of six battles with "the Bronx Bull," to become middleweight champion in 1951... Surprisingly lost the title to Randolph Turpin (PTS 15) in his first defense during a tour of Europe... However, Robinson upped his game and regained his crown a few months later in New York... Notched title defenses over familiar foes Carl "Bobo" Olson (UD 15) and Rocky Graziano (KO 3) in his second reign before a failed attempt for the light heavyweight crown convinced him to retire for two-and-a-half years... Powers began to wane during a mid-1950s comeback… Regained and defended the title vs. Olson (KO 2/KO 4), then lost and regained it against both Gene Fullmer and Carmen Basilio in 1957 and 1958... Rematch knockout of Fullmer (KO 5) perfectly illustrates how special a fighter he was, even at 35.

2 CARLOS MONZON

Big for the weight, could box and punch in equal measure... Came up on the tough Argentine circuit, losing three times relatively early in his career, and it wasn't until his 80th fight when he challenged Nino Benvenuti for the title… Battle-hardened, Monzon overwhelmed Nino Benvenuti (TKO 12) in 1970 and reigned for the next seven years, defending the title a record 14 times... Fought at home and in Europe where he was popular, venturing once to Madison Square Garden... Notable title wins include Benvenuti rematch (TKO 3), Emile Griffith (TKO 14/UD 15), and Jose Napoles (TKO 7)... Retired as champion after twice besting top contender Rodrigo Valdes (UD 15/UD 15).

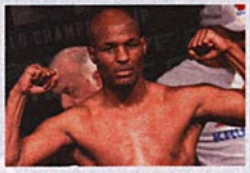
3 HARRY GREB

Fought in an untamed era but was indefatigable and inhumanly rugged even by the rough-and-tumble standards of the 1910s and 1920s…. reigned as American light heavyweight champ before dropping down to middleweight... Claimed the title by outpointing Johnny Wilson (UD 15) in 1923... Made four defenses, notably besting welterweight king (and future middleweight champ) Mickey Walker (UD 15)... Regularly faced top light heavyweights, including Tommy Loughran, Gene Tunney and Maxie Rosenbloom, during his championship tenure.



4 MARVELOUS MARVIN HAGLER

Was considered the best 160-pounder years before he won the title... Many felt he deserved the nod against Vito Antuofermo (D 15) in his first title shot in 1979... Took his frustration out on Alan Minter (TKO 3), winning the undisputed championship in 1980... Made 12 defenses over a seven-year stretch, regularly testing himself against the best middleweights of his era... Most notable defenses were against Roberto Duran (UD 15) and Thomas Hearns (TKO 3) in a shootout for the ages… final defense was a battle of attrition against unbeaten dangerman John Mugabi (KO 11)... Many believe he deserved the nod against Sugar Ray Leonard (SD 12)... The Marvelous One never accepted the loss and walked away from boxing.



5 BERNARD HOPKINS

Born and raised in the tough Philadelphia streets and only made harder during his time in prison, where he picked up boxing... Once released, Hopkins showed incredible focus and steely determination... Lost to the otherworldly Roy Jones Jr. (UD 12) in his first title attempt, however, "The Executioner" beat Segundo Mercado for the vacant IBF title after initially drawing with him... reigned a record 10 years, eventually unifying all four titles and making a division record 20 defenses... Possessing a work ethic that would shame a Spartan, Hopkins was also a master of mindgames, full of guile and ring smarts from bygone years... Notable title defenses and unifications include John David Jackson (TKO 7), Glen Johnson (TKO 11), Antwun Echols (UD 12/TKO 10), Keith Holmes (UD 12), Felix Trinidad (TKO 12) and Oscar De La Hoya (KO 9).

A NOTCH BELOW: Jake LaMotta, Stanley Ketchel

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

1 THOMAS HEARNS

Due in no small part to his large frame and knockout power, the former welterweight champ took to 154 pounds like a duck to water... Outpointed the stylistically challenging Wilfred Benitez (MD 15) to pick up the WBC title and made four defenses before chasing more championship hardware up at middleweight and beyond... Particularly remembered for his shocking one-punch knockout of the legendary Roberto Duran (KO 2)... Despite a relatively short time at the weight, he made a huge impression.

2 MIKE MCCALLUM

Won his first world title at 154 pounds and later enjoyed success at middleweight and light heavyweight... "The Bodysnatcher" was a well-rounded, no-nonsense technician with a granite chin... Held the WBA title for three years, defending it six times... Stopped Luigi Minchillo (TKO 13) in Italy, Julian Jackson (TKO 2) in a shootout, Milton McCrory (TKO 10) and Donald Curry (KO 5)... The ultimate "too good for his own good" fighter, McCallum was unable to lure any of the Four Kings into the ring.

3 TERRY NORRIS

The supremely gifted Texan beat more than a dozen top-notch fighters of the 1990s during three title reigns at 154 pounds... Nobody made as many defenses at the weight (16)... However, he was far from infallible, sometimes let down by his fierce in-the-ring temper, which led to disqualification losses, and his shaky chin, which failed him against Julian Jackson (TKO 2) and Simon Brown (KO 4)... When fully dialed in, he was a joy to behold: an intoxicating blend of speed, power and finesse... During his first title reign, he beat the aging trio of Sugar Ray Leonard (UD 12), Donald Curry (KO 8) and Meldrick Taylor (TKO 4)... Recovered from the Brown loss to soundly outbox him in a rematch.

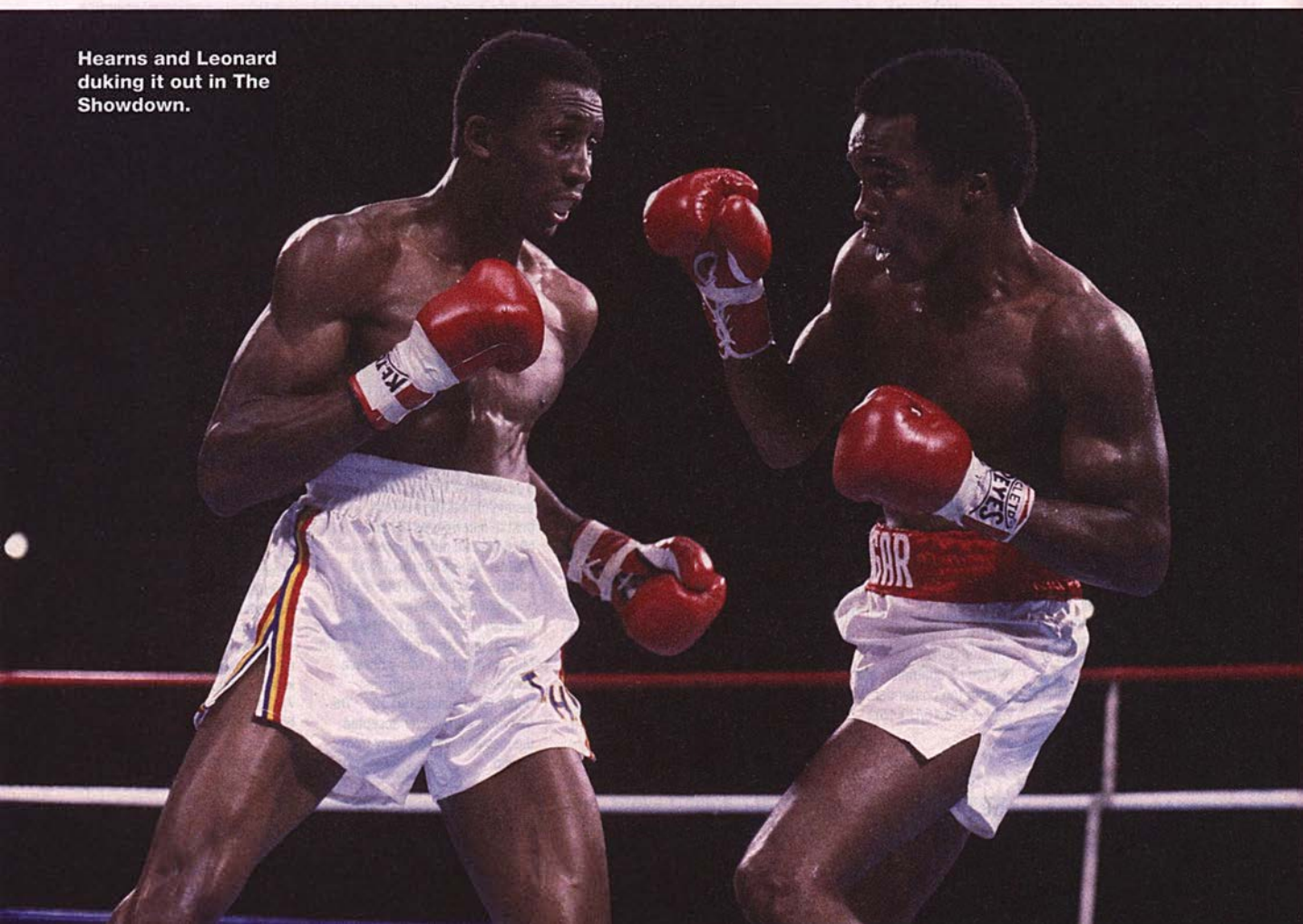
4 WINKY WRIGHT

Excellent defensive fighter who fought behind a high-held guard and used a fantastic southpaw jab to keep opponents honest... Nothing flashy but highly effective... Learned as he went along... Lost first title try when he was outpointed by the much more experienced Julio Cesar Vasquez (UD 12)... Won then-lightly regarded WBO title and fought in England until he lost to unheralded Harry Simon (MD 12)... Showed his worth in a controversial points loss to IBF boss Fernando Vargas (MD 12)... Won the vacant IBF title in 2001 and then gained acclaim by twice beating favored Ring/WBA/WBC champ Shane Mosley (UD 12/ MD 12).

5 NINO BENVENUTI

The hero of Italian boxing won gold at the 1960 Olympics in Rome and was awarded the prestigious Val Barker Trophy for best boxer of those games... Was undefeated in his first 65 pro bouts, during which time he beat countryman Sandro Mazzinghi (KO 6) for the 154-pound title and won the rematch (PTS 15) before losing it to Ki-Soo Kim in Seoul, Korea... Went on to become middleweight champion.

A NOTCH BELOW: Emile Griffith, Felix Trinidad, Ayub Kalule, Koichi Wajima, Sandro Mazzinghi, Julian Jackson



Hearns and Leonard duking it out in The Showdown.

WELTERWEIGHT

1 SUGAR RAY ROBINSON

Widely considered the best fighter pound-for-pound of all time, Robinson beat top fighters – including current, former and future champions – years before he won the 147-pound crown, including the likes of Fritzie Zivic (UD 10/TKO 10), Marty Servo (UD 10/SD 10), Sammy Angott (UD 10/UD 10), Jake LaMotta (four times out of five decisions) and Henry Armstrong (UD 10)... Beat Tommy Bell (UD 15) for the vacant title in 1946... Made five defenses, mixed in with an extremely busy schedule of non-title bouts during his four years as champion before vacating... Notably beat great Cuban stylist Kid Gavilan (UD 15) in a 1949 title defense.

2 SUGAR RAY LEONARD

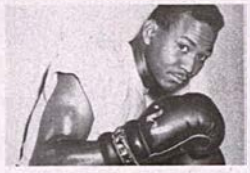
The darling of American boxing in the 1970s and '80s... Sprang onto the scene as a fresh-faced 20-year-old gold medal winner at the 1976 Olympics... Beat several Ring-rated contenders on his way to the championship, including Floyd Mayweather Sr. (TKO 10), Randy Shields (UD 10), Armando Muniz (TKO 6), Pete Ranzany (TKO 4) and Andy Price (KO 1) ... Stopped Puerto Rican great Wilfred Benitez (TKO 15) for the Ring and WBC titles... Lost to Roberto Duran in his second defense but showed a measure of his greatness by recalibrating and stopping the Panamanian in eight rounds in a direct rematch... Rubber-stamped himself as the face of the division when he came on strong in the championship rounds to earn the WBA title against rival Thomas Hearns (TKO 14) in a classic... Vacated the title due to a retina injury but returned to enjoy further success at higher weights.

3 HENRY ARMSTRONG

A phenom who simultaneously held titles at lightweight and featherweight, but he was most active as welterweight champ... After besting Barney Ross (UD 15) for the title, went on to make a division record 19 defenses... Incredibly made 11 title defenses in 1939, with five of them coming in October... Although he defended the welterweight title, he often weighed within the lightweight limit... Wins over Ceferino Garcia (UD 15), Baby Arizmendi (PTS 10) and Pedro Montanez (TKO 9) helped cement legacy.

4 THOMAS HEARNS

Often in the shadow of Sugar Ray Leonard, but his own ability couldn't be denied... Possessed devastating one-punch power, which was in evidence when he stopped the respected Bruce Finch (KO 3) and seasoned campaigners Clyde Gray (TKO 10), Harold Weston (TKO 6) and Angel Espada (TKO 4) en route to a WBA title fight with fellow puncher Pipino Cuevas. The long-reigning Mexican was no match for "The Hitman," who ruthlessly stopped him in two rounds... Made just three defenses, including a late stoppage of contender Randy Shields (TKO 12), before coming up short against Leonard.



5 JOSE NAPOLES

Cuban-born but moved to Mexico and later received citizenship... Smooth boxing style earned him the nickname "Mantequilla"... stopped future Hall of Famer Curtis Cokes (TKO 13) to become undisputed welterweight champion in April 1969... Made 13 defenses over two title reigns... Gained revenge over Billy Backus, who beat him on cuts, in their rematch to regain his titles... Has championship defenses against Cokes (TKO 10) in a rematch, Emile Griffith (UD 15), Ernie "Indian Red" Lopez (TKO 15/KO 7), and Hedgemon Lewis (UD 15/TKO 9).

A NOTCH BELOW: Floyd Mayweather Jr., Kid Gavilan, Emile Griffith, Felix Trinidad, Manny Pacquiao

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

1 JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ

"El Gran Campeon" is widely regarded as the greatest Mexican fighter ever, and his 140-pound stats back up that claim, as he went 18-2-1 in world title bouts at the weight... Stopped old rival Roger Mayweather (TKO 10) to become WBC titleholder… Won the IBF title in a grueling, come-from-behind, last-round knockout of Meldrick Taylor (TKO 12)... Holds wins over Puerto Rican stylist Hector Camacho (UD 12) and drew a mind-blowing 132,000 fans to witness his bludgeoning of Greg Haugen (TKO 5).

2 AARON PRYOR

A punching machine who didn't stop from the opening bell... Savagely beat long-reigning Ring/WBA champion Antonio Cervantes (TKO 4)... Made eight defenses in the early 1980s... Couldn't lure Sugar Ray Leonard into the ring but landed three-weight world champion Alexis Arguello. Pryor stopped the Nicaraguan great in two fierce encounters... Battled drug addiction, which shortened his prime.

3 KOSTYA TSZYU

After an outstanding amateur career, the Russian powerhouse migrated to Australia... Moved quickly as a professional, beating former titleholders Juan Laporte, Sammy Fuentes and Livingstone Bramble, as well as Ring-rated Hector Lopez, in his first 11 bouts… Claimed the IBF title in his 14th outing... Made 13 defenses over two reigns from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s... Known for his power but had underrated technical skills and ring generalship... Beat former lightweight champ Miguel Angel Gonzalez (TKO 10) to begin a second title reign, defended against a past-prime Chavez (TKO 6) and became undisputed Ring champion by unifying belts against Sharmba Mitchell (TKO 7) and Zab Judah (TKO 2).

4 BARNEY ROSS

Ross won titles at lightweight and welterweight as well as at junior welterweight... Questionable win over Tony Canzoneri (MD 10) for lightweight and junior welterweight titles led to a rematch, in which Ross edged matters (SD 15)... Made 10 defenses of the junior welterweight title… Vacated the 140-pound title after regaining the welterweight crown from Jimmy McLarnin in their rubber match... Was a decorated soldier who served in World War II following his retirement.

5 ANTONIO CERVANTES

Tall boxer-puncher became Colombia's first world champion and ruled for much of the 1970s... Twice reigned as WBA titleholder, totaling 16 defenses... "Kid Pambele" beat Nicolino Locche (TKO 9), Alfonso Frazer (TKO 5) and Esteban De Jesus (UD 15)... His standing was hurt by losses to Wilfred Benitez and the relentless Pryor when he was past his prime... Rumored bout with lightweight kingpin Roberto Duran never came to pass.

A NOTCH BELOW: Nicolino Locche, Jack "Kid" Berg, Oscar De La Hoya

LIGHTWEIGHT

1 ROBERTO DURAN
Close to a perfect fighting machine at this weight... Unmatched ferocity and heavy-handed, but with underrated defensive skills... Burst onto the scene by stopping Ring/WBA champion Ken Buchanan (TKO 13)... Went on to beat 12 challengers, with only one hearing the final bell... Became less reckless as he learned on the job, due to the teachings of legendary trainer Ray Arcel... "Manos De Piedra" beat Esteban De Jesus in two of three bouts (the loss in their first meeting was a non-title bout); the third fight saw him annex the WBC title and become undisputed champion.

2 BENNY LEONARD
Did not make as many title defenses as Duran but is equally revered by historians... Master tactician who used speed, footwork and defense to nullify his opponents... Beat Freddie Welsh (TKO 9) for the title and reigned for seven years... Retired as champion, age 28, at the behest of his mother... Took on welterweight champs during his lightweight reign but drew with Ted "Kid" Lewis (in an eight-round newspaper decision) and was disqualified against Jack Britton (DQ 13), though he did beat Britton in two non-title bouts… Also beat Lew Tendler (UD 15) and Rocky Kansas (UD 15) in title defenses.

3 JOE GANS
Fought in an era when black fighters seldom received title opportunities but still became the first African American world champion of the 20th century... The Baltimore native was in his prime in the late 1800s and early 1900s, when he halted Frank Erne in the first round for the lightweight title (1902)... never weighed more than 143 pounds but often fought larger men, such as Jack Blackburn (PTS 15); the great Sam Langford, who outpointed him over 15 rounds; and welterweight champ "Barbados" Joe Walcott (D 20)... "The Old Master" made 14 title defenses over two reigns... Vacated his title due to weight issues but returned to beat Battling Nelson (DQ 42) in a brutal, grueling marathon title fight to the finish.

4 PERNELL WHITAKER
Turned professional after winning gold at the 1984 Olympics... Lost a highly controversial fight against Jose Luis Ramirez (SD 12) in his first title shot... Unperturbed, went on to unify all three major titles of the time to become the undisputed lightweight king by 1990... Arguably the best southpaw of all time, "Sweet Pea" exhibited sublime defensive skills and dominated world-class fighters to such an extent that they looked like novices... Bested Greg Haugen (UD 12) for his first title, then unified IBF and WBC belts vs. Ramirez (UD 12) in a rematch that also earned him the Ring championship, shut down the great Azumah Nelson (UD 12) and bested Jorge Paez (UD 12) in his final lightweight bout.

5 IKE WILLIAMS
Fierce African American boxer-puncher ripped the National Boxing Association (later the WBA) title from Juan Zurita (TKO 2) in 1945... Held the title for six years, making eight defenses, including eye-catching knockouts over Bob Montgomery (TKO 6), which earned him undisputed champion recognition, and popular contenders Beau Jack (TKO 6) and Enrique Bolanos (TKO 8/TKO 4)... Often fought world-class welterweights, including Kid Gavilan, Johnny Bratton and Carmen Basilio... When he struggled to get fights, he opted to be managed by infamous mobster Frank "Blinky" Palermo.

A NOTCH BELOW: Tony Canzoneri, Henry Armstrong, Carlos Ortiz

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

1 ALEXIS ARGUELLO
Classy boxer with fight-ending power more than lived up to his "Explosive Thin Man" moniker... Moved up from featherweight, where he was a titleholder, to unseat long-reigning Alfredo Escalera (TKO 13) in a bloody, brutal battle... Made eight defenses, all on the road, turning back the likes of Escalera in a rematch (TKO 13), Rafael Limon (TKO 11), Bobby Chacon (TKO 7) and Ruben Castillo (TKO 11)... Never lost at the weight and vacated to enjoy further success up at lightweight.

2 FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
Before he was "Money," he was "Pretty Boy," and more than a defensive wizard; the 1996 Olympic bronze medalist had pop in his often-fragile hands... Poise and otherworldly skill came to the fore when he beat up Genaro Hernandez (TKO 8) for his first world title... Made eight defenses before vacating and moving up in weight... Scored wins over Angel Manfredy (TKO 2), Diego Corrales (TKO 10) and Jesus Chavez (TKO 9)... Close to untouchable at 130, he relied more on defense and ring generalship as he moved up in weight... The dominating Corrales performance was particularly eye-opening and arguably one of the best in the division's history.

3 JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ
Won 43 consecutive outings before, at 22, he became the WBC beltholder when he beat pre-fight favorite Mario Martinez in 1984… Made nine defenses in three years... Handled the firepower of Roger Mayweather (TKO 2) and turned back top-tier veterans Ruben Castillo (TKO 6), Rocky Lockridge (MD 12) and Juan Laporte (UD 12)... Used the division as a springboard to win a lightweight title and then flourished at junior welterweight.

4 AZUMAH NELSON
Went from a raw featherweight novice who tested the great Salvador Sanchez in a 15-round TKO loss to a seasoned fighting machine with a fantastic boxing brain by the time he had matured and moved up in weight... The best fighter from boxing-rich Ghana, but might just be the best from his continent... Made 12 defenses over two title reigns... Holds wins over Mario Martinez (SD 12/TKO 12) and Juan Laporte (UD 12)... Battled malaria as well as Jeff Fenech, who held him to a controversial draw in 1991, but was devastating in the rematch, stopping the Australian in eight rounds... "The Professor" was equally dominant in stopping Gabriel Ruelas (TKO 5) and Jesse James Leija (TKO 6) in 1995 and 1996 return bouts.

5 MANNY PACQUIAO
Despite only fighting in the division eight times over a three-year period, he regularly tested himself, going 7-1... Erik Morales outpointed him over 12 rounds in his first fight at 130 pounds, but Pacquiao rebounded to stop "El Terrible" in two subsequent fights... Also owns victories over Marco Antonio Barrera (UD 12) and Juan Manuel Marquez (SD 12) at 130... Went on to enjoy more success at higher weights but was equally special during his foray here.

A NOTCH BELOW: Flash Elorde, Kid Chocolate, Brian Mitchell

Whitaker outpointed Chavez in their September 1993 superfight.

FEATHERWEIGHT

1 WILLIE PEP

Thought of as the greatest defensive fighter of his time and one of the very best of all time... Was incredibly active, even by his era's standards: He boxed 241 fights during a remarkable 26-year career... Won the world title in 1942, outboxing Chalky Wright (UD 15)... Lost for the first time (to Hall of Famer Sammy Angott) after winning his first 62 fights...Defended his title six times (along with 76 non-title fights, the only loss being to Angott) before losing to Sandy Saddler (KO 4), but impressively bested Saddler in their rematch (UD 15), The Ring's 1949 Fight of the Year... Retained his title three times before losing to Saddler twice more. However, rates above Saddler despite the losses because he was considered past his best when they fought and he defeated more top featherweights of their era, including Sal Bartolo and Phil Terranova… Also beat bantamweight great Manuel Ortiz in a non-title bout.

2 SALVADOR SANCHEZ

The highly skilled Mexican was blessed with speed, power, boundless energy and brilliant counterpunching ability... He was champion for just two-and-a-half years but was exceptionally active, making nine defenses beating the likes of Danny Lopez (TKO 13/TKO 14), Juan Laporte (UD 15), Wilfredo Gomez (TKO 8), and Azumah Nelson (TKO 15)... His life was tragically cut short when he was killed in a car accident at the age of 23... Who knows what heights he could have achieved had he not died at such a young age?

3 HENRY ARMSTRONG

Not many fighters go 1-4 in their first five fights and go on to become much. Armstrong not only went on to become one of the best featherweights ever, he is considered one of the best fighters in any weight class... Won featherweight champ recognition in Mexico and California by outpointing Hall of Famer Baby Arizmendi in 1936 before gaining worldwide status in 1937 with a stoppage of Petey Sarron (KO 6)... "Homicide Hank" also defeated Hall of Famer Midget Wolgast and Mike Belloise, the recognized world titleholder in New York, at featherweight.

4 SANDY SADDLER

Saddler was a big featherweight who regularly fought at junior lightweight... Excellent power and a granite chin saw him score 104 KOs in his 145 victories, and he only lost once inside the distance (in his second pro bout)... The Boston native was just 22 when he beat Willie Pep (KO 4), but already had 94 fights... Won three out of the four times they fought, all by stoppage in often foul-filled contests... Kept an incredibly busy schedule but made just three defenses in a six-year reign... Retired as featherweight champion, at age 29, due to a detached retina in 1957.

5 ABE ATTELL

Excellent boxer who twice held the featherweight title in the early 1900s... Made 22 defenses over two reigns... After twice drawing with George Dixon (D 10/D 20), he beat "Little Chocolate" in their third fight (PTS 15) before becoming world champion with a 20-round decision over Johnny Regan in 1903... Was associated with gangster Arnold Rothstein and implicated in the fixing of the 1919 World Series, though the charges were dismissed.

A NOTCH BELOW: Eusebio Pedroza, Vicente Saldivar, George Dixon, Naseem Hamed

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

1 WILFREDO GOMEZ

The Puerto Rican legend is the gold standard by which all other junior featherweights are measured... "Bazooka" holds the division record for longest reign (5 years, 11 months) and most successful title defenses (17)... He never lost at 122 pounds and later gained further acclaim by winning featherweight and junior lightweight titles... While known for his ferocious power in both hands, which incredibly scored knockouts in all 18 championship fights, he was also a highly skilled boxer... Beat Mexican puncher Carlos Zarate (TKO 5) in a superfight and exhibited his vaunted power vs. Royal Kobayashi (KO 3), Nicky Perez (TKO 5), Juan Meza (TKO 6) and Lupe Pintor (TKO 14).

2 MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA

Won his first world title at 122 pounds, at age 21, and went on to make 13 defenses over two reigns... "The Baby Faced Assassin" was an outstanding offensive fighter, often breaking down his opponents with a debilitating left hook to the liver... Beat former titleholders Eddie Cook (TKO 8), Kennedy McKinney (TKO 12) in an epic battle and Jesse Benavides (KO 3)... Stunningly lost twice to Junior Jones (DQ 5/UD 12) but rebounded to regain his old WBO title... Along with Gomez-Zarate, Barrera's first fight with archrival Erik Morales is the biggest fight in the division's history... Although Morales won (SD 12), many believe Barrera did enough and should have been awarded the decision.

3 ERIK MORALES

One of the fiercest competitors of modern times, tall for the weight, with fight-ending power and a sturdy chin to go with his warrior's heart... Tijuana's finest showed experience beyond his years to take down old war horse Daniel Zaragoza (KO 11) to win the WBC title in 1997... "El Terrible" went on to stop seven of his nine opponents in subsequent title defenses. Only iron-jawed Wayne McCullough and Barrera lasted the distance... Also beat former titleholder Hector Acero Sanchez (UD 12) prior to winning the world title and stopped Barrera-conqueror Junior Jones (KO 4) in a title defense.

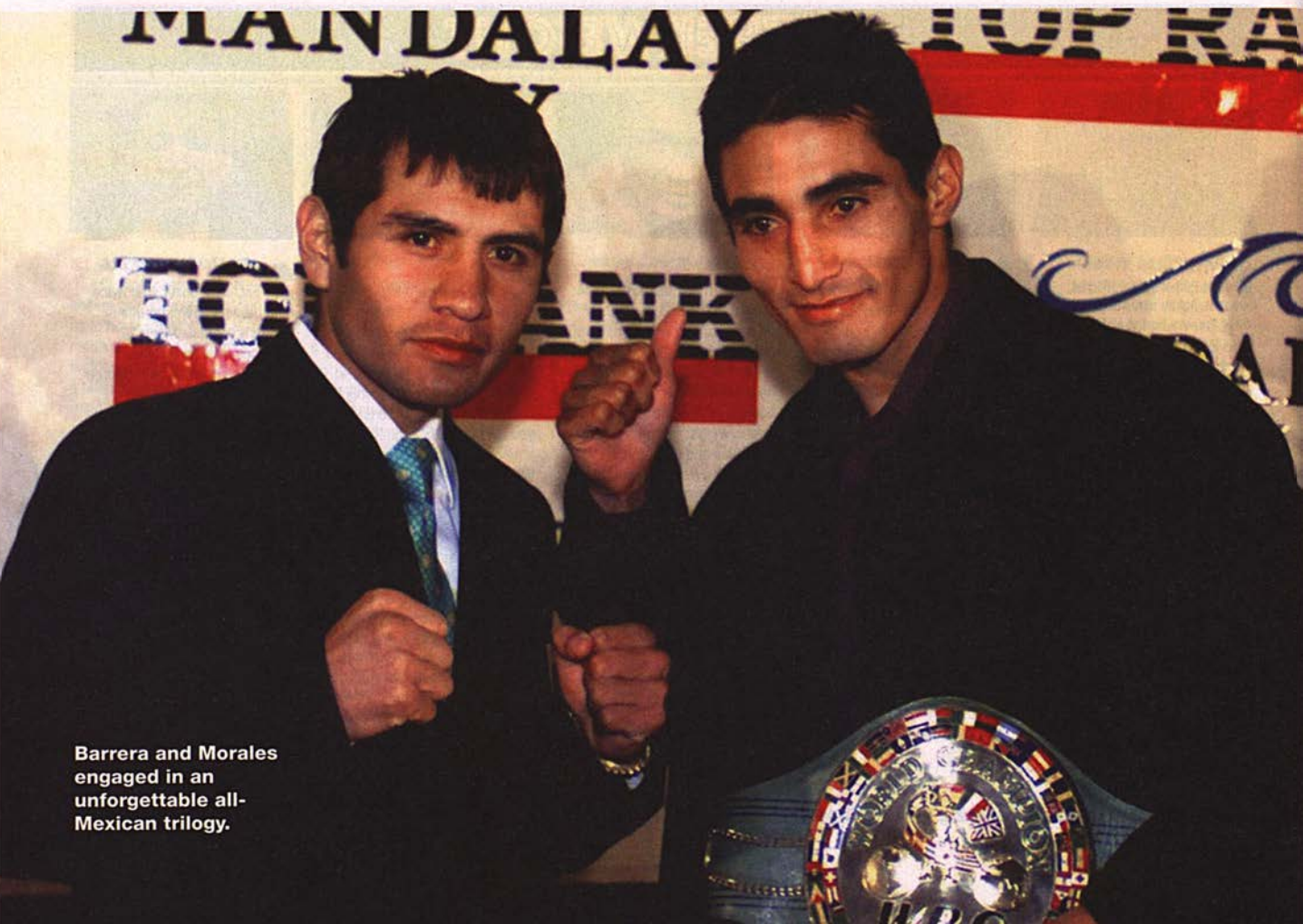
4 GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX

The polarizing Cuban won Olympic gold in 2000 and 2004 before turning professional amid much fanfare... Although he never lived up to his lofty billing, he was still a master of punch-picking and defense... Won the WBA title in 2012 and made eight defenses… Likely cracks the list because of his 2013 clinic against pound-for-pound-rated Nonito Donaire (UD 12), which earned him the Ring championship and WBO strap. Unapologetically avoided, he was unable to capitalize and further unify with the other champions of his time.

5 DANIEL ZARAGOZA

The former bantamweight beltholder gained more acclaim in the 122-pound division, where he lost to Jeff Fenech (UD 10) in his first bout at the weight, but won the vacant WBC title from a shopworn Carlos Zarate (TKO 10)... Made 11 defenses over three title reigns... Like a fine wine, he got better with age... Fought on the road in South Korea, Italy, U.S. and Japan with success... Not the biggest puncher but a smart, awkwardly effective ring general... A late-career run helped him claim the final spot on this list… Regained the WBC title at age 37, turning back popular Japanese slugger Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (TKO 11/UD 12) in Japan as well as Wayne McCullough (SD 12) before finally losing to Morales.

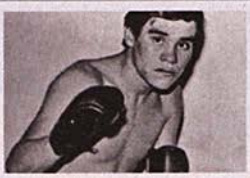
A NOTCH BELOW: Wilfredo Vazquez, Israel Vazquez, Jeff Fenech, Nonito Donaire, Manny Pacquiao



Barrera and Morales engaged in an unforgettable all-Mexican trilogy.

BANTAMWEIGHT

1 EDER JOFRE
The first Brazilian-born champion and by far his country's best... Rose to prominence when he claimed the world title by stopping Johnny Caldwell (TKO 10)... Made five defenses, notably retaining his strap against grizzled veteran Jose Medal (KO 6) before going on the road to beat Katsutoshi Aoki (KO 3) in Japan, Johnny Jamito (TKO 11) in the Philippines and Bernardo Caraballo (KO 7) in Colombia... "O Galo De Ouro" (The Golden Bantam) retired after losing twice against Fighting Harada (SD 15/ UD 15) in Japan... Returned and showed his greatness by winning the featherweight title at age 37.



2 RUBEN OLIVARES
"Rockabye Ruben" moved up the ranks in the mid-to-late 1960s with devastating ease, scoring 49 knockouts in 52 bouts without a loss on his way to his title-winning knockout of Lionel Rose (KO 5) in 1969... Made quick work of contender Alan Rudkin (TKO 2) in his first title defense before meeting fellow Mexican Chucho Castillo. Olivares bested his rival in their first meeting (UD 15), only to lose for the first time (in 61 pro bouts) in their rematch on cuts (TKO 14). He rebounded to take the series with an off-the-canvas 15-round unanimous decision... He would make two more defenses before losing to underrated countryman Rafael Herrera (KO 8). Blamed weight issues and resurfaced at featherweight, where he would later twice win versions of the title.

3 CARLOS ZARATE
Similar to how Marvin Hagler emerged just after another great champion in Carlos Monzon, Zarate did so with Olivares... His vaunted power was evidenced by going 39-0 with 38 knockouts en route to the title... Won the WBC belt against Rodolfo Martinez (KO 9) and made nine defenses, all inside the distance... Notched wins against Paul Ferreri (TKO 12), Waruinge Nakayama (KO 4) and Alberto Davila (TKO 8)... Attempted to unify mid-reign by facing fellow undefeated KO artist and WBA titleholder Alfonso Zamora (KO 4), however, politics got in the way and the famous "Battle of the Z-Boys" became a non-title bout... Also tried to step up to junior featherweight, where Wilfredo Gomez proved too much for him.

4 MANUEL ORTIZ
The main man at bantamweight for much of the 1940s... Made 19 defenses over the course of two title reigns, including 15 in his first stint as champion, a division record that stood more than 50 years until Orlando Canizales surpassed that mark... Boasts wins over Lou Salica (UD 12/TKO 11) and Jackie Jurich (TKO 9/KO 11)... His title reign was briefly interrupted when he lost to Harold Dade (UD 15), but he quickly regained champion status two months later by flipping the script on Dade... Lost his title a second time against Vic Toweel (PTS 15) in South Africa.

5 PANAMA AL BROWN
The 5-foot-11 Panamanian was especially tall for the weight and often used that advantage to keep his opponents honest behind a sharp jab... Often fought in the U.S. and Europe, where he was very popular... It's said he spoke as many as seven different languages, which doubtlessly aided his globetrotting... He became his country's first world champion in 1929 and held the title for five years, turning back nine challengers, including the respected trio of Eugene Huat (UD 15/UD 15), Pete Sanstol (SD 15) and Emile Pladner (KO 1).

A NOTCH BELOW: Terry McGovern, Orlando Canizales, Veeraphol Sahaprom, Naoya Inoue

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

1 KHAOSAI GALAXY
The fearsome Thai southpaw had over 100 Muay Thai contests before turning his attention to boxing... After winning the vacant WBA 115-pound title in 1984, went on to make a division-record 19 defenses over a seven-year reign... Defended his title against former two-time WBC titlist Rafael Orono (TKO 5) and future WBC/WBO bantamweight titleholder Israel Contreras (KO 5)... He hoped to unify, but the IBF wouldn't sanction his fight with Elly Pical. It didn't matter; Galaxy traveled to Indonesia and stopped his rival in 14 rounds… The aggressive puncher was too strong for his opponents and continued his reign of terror mostly at home, racking up the defenses, but he did travel to South Korea and Japan... Galaxy retired as champion.

2 JIRO WATANABE
Although the skilled Japanese southpaw didn't pick up a pair of gloves until he was 22, he quickly excelled... Lost a close but unanimous decision to WBC titlist Chul Ho Kim in South Korea in 1981... He claimed the WBA title a year later when he outboxed Rafael Pedroza (UD 15)... Made six defenses of his crown, beating respected past or future world titleholders Gustavo Ballas (TKO 9), Shoji Oguma (TKO 12) and Soon Chun Kwon (TD 11)... Looked to unify with WBC counterpart Payao Poontarat but was stripped of his WBA belt before edging past his Thai opponent (SD 12) and went on to make four more defenses of the WBC belt... He was probably past his prime when he lost his title to Gilberto Roman (UD 12) and never fought again.

3 JOHNNY TAPIA
The wayward American enjoyed success at higher weights, but it is at junior bantamweight that he was most successful... Claimed the fledgling WBO title stopping Henry Martinez (TKO 11)... Went on to make 14 defenses... Edged former amateur rival Arthur Johnson (MD 12) and outboxed future beltholder Hugo Soto (UD 12), but it is his win over crosstown rival Danny Romero (UD 12) in a WBO/IBF unification bout that garnered the most acclaim. Most expected the hot-headed New Mexican to go gung-ho at the bigger punching Romero, but "Mi Vida Loca" kept a calm head in the midst of battle and dominated the grudge match using his elite-level boxing ability… Was unbeaten in 45 bouts (43-0-2) at the end of his 115-pound title reign.

4 GILBERTO ROMAN
A typical Nacho Beristain boxer, very technical and economical, but he had the grit to go with his savvy... Initially fought at bantamweight but impressively bested Watanabe (UD 12) in Japan to win the WBC crown... Made 11 defenses over two reigns... His title reign was interrupted by a loss on cuts to Santos Laciar (TKO 11)... Beat Laciar's conqueror Sugar Baby Rojas (UD 12)... Scored road wins over Kongtoranee Payakaroon (UD 12), Kiyoshi Hatanaka (UD 12), Rojas (UD 12) and Laciar (UD 12)... Had only two title defenses in Mexico, losing to Nana Yaw Konadu (UD 12) in one of them... Past his prime when he was stopped by Sung Kil Moon (TKO 8)... Sadly passed away in a car accident a few weeks later, just 28.

5 SUNG KIL MOON
A highly successful amateur who competed at the 1984 Olympics, his crowning moment came when he claimed gold at the 1986 World Championships... In just his seventh pro bout, he beat Khaosai Galaxy's twin, Khaokor (TD 6), to become the WBA bantamweight titleholder... Made two defenses before losing the rematch to Galaxy (UD 12) in Thailand... The South Korean had a propensity to cut in several of his fights... Made the unusual decision to drop to 115 pounds and beat WBC ruler Nana Konadu (TD 9)... Made nine defenses, notably beating Roman (TKO 8), Konadu (TKO 4), Greg Richardson (MD 12), Hilario Zapata (TKO 1) and Carlos Salazar (SD 12).

A NOTCH BELOW: Vic Darchinyan, Juan Francisco Estrada, Srisaket Sor Rungvisai

FLYWEIGHT

1 JIMMY WILDE
The big-punching Welshman is almost universally celebrated as the best 112-pounder of all time, but he regularly fought and beat much bigger men... Weighed less than 100 pounds for many of his fights… Always undersized but never outgunned, the "Ghost With The Hammer In His Hand" is regarded as one of the biggest punchers ever, pound-for-pound, and was voted the third-biggest puncher of all time by The Ring Magazine... Records at the time are difficult to come by and differ, but it is believed Wilde didn't lose for over 90 fights and lost just three of nearly 150 bouts while also engaging in hundreds of booth bouts... He beat Joe Symonds (TKO 12) to become world champion and beat Tancy Lee (KO 11) and Young Zulu Kid (KO 11).

2 MIGUEL CANTO
Canto is a far cry from the archetypal Mexican puncher in that he was a pure boxer. He used brains over brawn, scoring just 15 knockouts in 74 bouts... Canto came up the hard way on the notoriously tough Mexican circuit. Lost to Betulio Gonzalez (MD 15) in his first title attempt but beat Gonzalez-conqueror Shoji Oguma (MD 15) in Japan to become the WBC titleholder... The defensive wizard tallied 14 successful defenses over a four-year period, almost always outpointing his opponent... Of his 18 world title fights, 12 were away from home and he only lost two of those... He beat Gonzalez (SD 15/SD 15) and Oguma (SD 15/UD 15) in a series of fights.

3 PASCUAL PEREZ
The Argentine won gold at the 1948 Olympics before making the transition to the professional ranks with equal success... Won the flyweight world title just two years into his pro career by going to Japan and unseating Yoshio Shirai and never looked back... Made nine defenses over six years, often on the road, where he exhibited impressive power... Lost the title to the excellent Pone Kingpetch (SD 12), who stopped Perez in eight rounds in an immediate rematch five months later... His successful defenses included Shirai (KO 5), Leo Espinosa (UD 15) and Dai Dower (KO 1).

4 PANCHO VILLA
Became the first Filipino world champion when he unseated Wilde in 1923... He was very busy, as was customary in those days, and retained his title a handful of times... Although he twice lost to Frankie Genaro, he beat Johnny Buff (TKO 11), Abe Goldstein (UD 15) and Bud Taylor (UD 12), among other standouts... Tragically passed away at age 23 from blood poisoning, the result of an infection following a wisdom tooth extraction, after surprisingly losing to a 10-round points decision to future welterweight champ Jimmy McLarnin... Still revered in his homeland today.

5 FRANKIE GENARO
Capitalized on winning gold at the 1920 Olympics by moving quickly as a professional... The New Yorker was an expert boxer who outboxed Villa (SD 15) for the American flyweight title in 1923. The victory was later enhanced when Villa stopped Wilde to become world champion… The Italian American faced many of the best fighters in and around his weight class, including the likes of Memphis Pal Moore (DQ 6), Kid Williams (PTS 12) and Midget Wolgast (D 15). Lost to Fidel LaBarba (PTS 10) but later claimed the NBA title and made 10 defenses over two reigns.

A NOTCH BELOW: Fidel LaBarba, Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, Benny Lynch, Mark Johnson, Roman Gonzalez

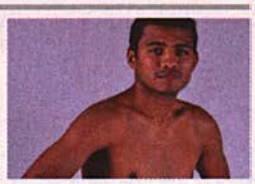
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

1 MICHAEL CARBAJAL
After winning silver at the 1988 Olympics, he quickly transitioned to the professional side of the sport... Carbajal was big for the weight but didn't use his size to outbox opponents, preferring to use his power... Beat well-regarded Thai Muangchai Kittikasem (TKO 7) to become the IBF titlist... Made six defenses before he collided with WBC beltholder Humberto "Chiquita" Gonzalez in a unification bout. The American twice dragged himself off the canvas before knocking out his rival in seven rounds... Made an unprecedented $1 million for the rematch, which he lost (SD 12)... He was also beaten in their third fight (MD 12) but later claimed three more world titles... Rounded out his career with a come-from-behind knockout of Jorge Arce (TKO 11).

2 HUMBERTO GONZALEZ
"Chiquita" could box and punch in equal measure... Became WBC titleholder when he bested Yul Woo Lee (UD 12) in South Korea; returned to repeat the trick against Jung Koo Chang (UD 12)... Made 11 defenses over three reigns... Lost to Carbajal in their first clash but showed a smart boxing brain to outbox his big rival in second and third meetings... The Mexican enjoyed a good tear-up, and that cost him on three occasions. His recklessness saw him lose to Rolando Pascua (KO 6), Carbajal (KO 7) and Saman Sorjaturong (TKO 7).

3 JUNG KOO CHANG
A force of nature at 108 pounds... With minimal experience, he barely lost to WBC titlist Hilario Zapata (SD 15)... Six months later, he claimed the title by stopping Zapata (TKO 3)... "The Korean Hawk" built a fearsome reputation, turning back future world champions German Torres (UD 12, MD 12, UD 12), Sot Chitalada (UD 12), Hideyuki Ohashi (TKO 5 and TKO 8) and the heavy-handed Isidro Perez (UD 12).

4 HILARIO ZAPATA
A slick defensive master whose style was a nightmare for all who faced him... He won the WBC title on the road and regularly defended it in Asia and South America... Lost his title in startling fashion to Amado Ursua (KO 2) but beat Ursua's conqueror Tadashi Tomori (SD 15) to regain his title... After edging Chang in their first encounter (SD 15), weight issues saw him lose in three rounds in the rematch.



5 ROMAN GONZALEZ
Fought at the weight just eight times, but he fit a lot into that time, regularly fighting battle-hardened Mexicans in their backyard… Won the WBA title in 2011 and made four defenses... Hard-fought victory over Juan Francisco Estrada (UD 12) is retrospectively huge and a significant reason why he was able to hold off Yuh and Gushiken for the No. 5 spot.

A NOTCH BELOW: Myung Woo Yuh, Yoko Gushiken, Ricardo Lopez

Carbajal halted Gonzalez in their first fight but lost the next two via close decisions.

STRAWWEIGHT

1 RICARDO LOPEZ

The highly technical Mexican assassin is widely regarded as the greatest strawweight of all time. "Finito" holds the division record for longest reign (nine years) and most successful title defenses (21)... Claimed the WBC title with a fifth-round stoppage win over Hideyuki Ohashi in Japan... Beat future 108-pound titleholder Saman Sorjaturong (TKO 2), once-beaten contender Ala Villamor (KO 8) and WBO titlist Alex Sanchez (TKO 5) in a unification bout... The lone blemish on his ledger came against Rosendo Alvarez when the two fought to a blood-splattered eight-round technical draw. Unperturbed, Lopez edged the heavier Alvarez by split decision to win the rematch and add the WBA title to his impressive resume.

2 IVAN CALDERON

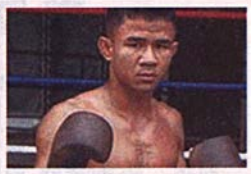
The Puerto Rican stylist was a top amateur who represented his country at the 2000 Olympics before embarking on a pro career... "Iron Boy" won the WBO strawweight title in 2003, and over the course of the next four years he made 12 defenses before abdicating his throne and moving up in weight... During his championship tenure, the diminutive southpaw, who was always undersized, showcased his considerable ring craft by soundly outboxing former world titleholders Alex Sanchez (UD 12), Roberto Leyva (UD 12) and Daniel Reyes (UD 12)... Calderon was recognized as one of the best pure boxers of the 2000s.

3 ROMAN GONZALEZ

The Alexis Arguello prodigy took apart Yutaka Niida (TKO 4) to claim the WBA title at just 21... "Chocolatito" made just three defenses before moving up in weight, which doubtlessly hurts his chances of being ranked higher… Bested the tough Francisco Rosas (MD 12) in Mexico, five-time strawweight titlist Katsunari Takayama (UD 12) in Japan, and easily vanquished Ivan Meneses Flores (TKO 4), again in Mexico... The diminutive Nicaraguan went on to become a four-weight world champion, but at 105, before the world got to know him, he was a wonderful boxer-puncher.

4 ROSENDO ALVAREZ

"El Bufalo" edged previously unbeaten Chana Porpaoin (SD 12) in Thailand, a near-impossible feat at the time, for his first world title... Although he made just five successful defenses, the level of opposition was high. He knocked out Kermin Guardia (KO 3) less than two years after the once-beaten Colombian had gone the distance with Lopez. The battle-hardened Alvarez retained his title twice more in Japan and again in Thailand against respectable opposition... Alvarez gave Lopez (TD 8) the toughest fight of the Mexican master's career… Lost his title on the scales prior to Lopez taking his unbeaten record via split decision in their rematch, but just running Lopez close is a measure of just how good Alvarez was.



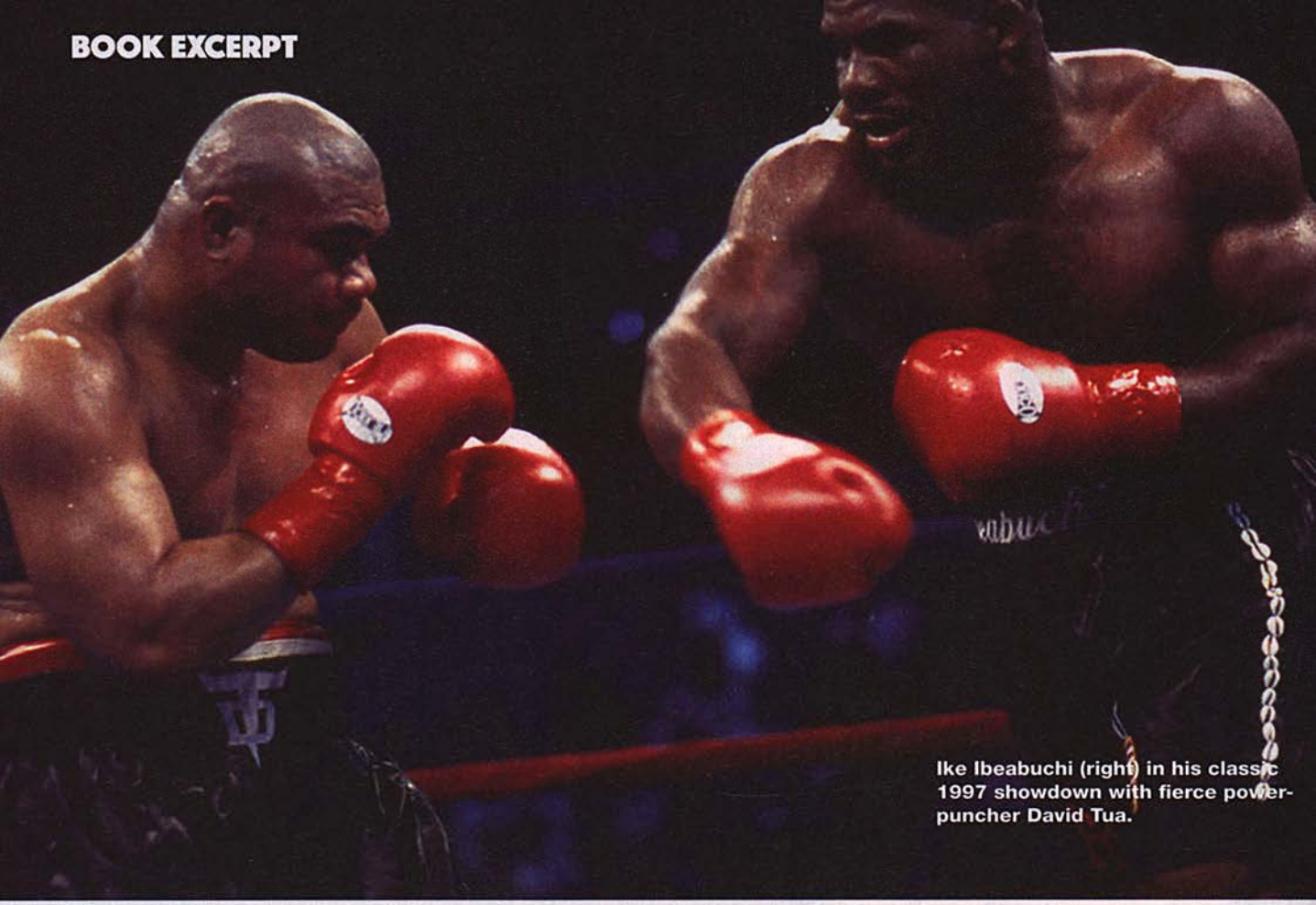
5 CHANA PORPAOIN

The Thai boxer impressively won the WBA title from Hideyuki Ohashi (MD 12) in Japan. He was an active titleholder, making eight title defenses over a near-three-year period. In the midst of his title reign, he twice beat the excellent Panamanian Carlos Murillo (UD 12/MD 12)... Lost the title to Alvarez but was able to briefly regain it several years later when, aged 35, he beat Keitaro Hoshino (SD 12) in Japan. Father Time then caught up with him and he lost the belt to Niida in his first defense. RING

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

A NOTCH BELOW: Ratanapol Sor Vorapin, Wanheng Menayothin, Zolani Petelo

THE RING MAGAZINE



Ike Ibeabuchi (right) in his classic 1997 showdown with fierce power-puncher David Tua.

BEFORE DAY TURNS TO DUSK

IKE IBEABUCHI PONDERED A COMEBACK DURING A BRIEF PERIOD BETWEEN INCARCERATIONS, BUT THE FORMER HEAVYWEIGHT CONTENDER'S MENTAL STATE AT THE TIME WAS CAUSE FOR ALARM

By **Luke G. Williams**

I was an Ike Ibeabuchi fan the moment I watched his battle with David Tua on a pirated video I ordered from a classified ad in the back of Boxing Monthly magazine. The Nigerian powerhouse seemed to have everything needed to win the heavyweight title – except mental stability.

A few years after he was jailed for battery and sexual assault, I decided to go digging in search of the real Ike Ibeabuchi, aiming to discover what built and then broke the man who had the boxing world at his feet after he destroyed Chris Byrd in 1999.

While researching the book that would become President of Pandemonium: The Mad World of Ike Ibeabuchi, I spoke to thirty people who knew Ike – including those who fought him, managed him, advised him and reported on him. I discovered that some thought he was insane, while others thought he was more sinned against than sinner.

This excerpt from my book – coming this October from Hamilcar – tells the story of the day I spoke to Ike and includes the views of former HBO executive Lou DiBella, matchmaker Eric Bottjer and trainer Bill Benton.

LUKE G. WILLIAMS

PRESIDENT of PANDEMONIUM

THE MAD WORLD OF IKE IBEABUCHI

HAMILCAR NOIR

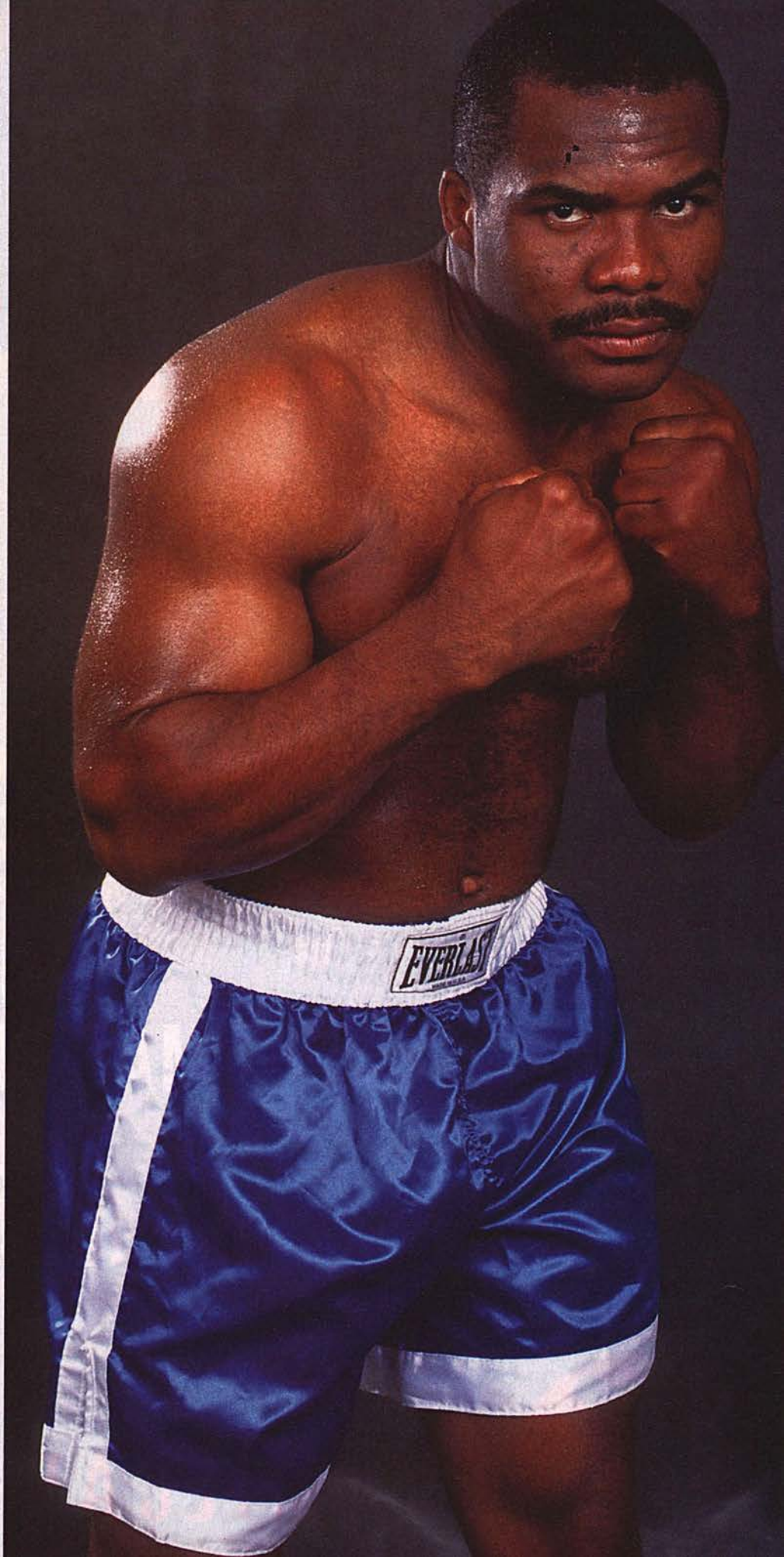
When I spoke to Ike Ibeabuchi on a February afternoon in 2016, he could scarcely believe he was free.

Maybe he knew it couldn't last. Or maybe he had become too hardened by his tour of federal institutions. Being removed from a place inhabited by killers and rapists and placed in suburbia must be disorientating. Out of the harsh and dehumanizing experience of an ICE detention center, or the sterile menace of a maximum-security prison, Ibeabuchi could now enjoy the unbroken sight of winter sunshine and the soft breeze blowing in from the desert.

As we spoke, the forty-three-year-old former heavyweight contender from Nigeria sat in a spare room of an aunt's house in Gilbert, Arizona. Because "aunt" is an appellation applied loosely in Nigeria to both blood relatives and others, it wasn't clear what Ike's connection to his "aunt" was. Regardless, since his release from custody, he had sat here for hours fixated on the world heavyweight championship he still believed was his destiny, despite the fact it was nearly seventeen years since he had thrown a punch in a prizefight. Since 1999, Ibeabuchi's professional record had stood still, perfect and unbroken.

Twenty fights, twenty wins, fifteen knockouts.

When he wasn't at his aunt's, Ibeabuchi was training hard at a 24-hour branch of LA Fitness, anonymously going about the grim business



of working his forty-something body into shape among insomniac gym freaks and overweight office workers. As he fielded messages on his cell phone from promotional and media bloodsuckers and posed for grainy photographs in boxing gear – snarl still on his bearded face – it must have been easy to convince himself that he still had a shot at the heavyweight title.

Images of post-prison Ibeabuchi soon began to spread across the Internet, exciting those old enough to remember his thrilling war with David Tua and his shocking destruction of Chris Byrd. Social media platforms were soon ablaze with debates about whether Ibeabuchi could or should make a comeback.

Ike was happy to stoke the anticipation.

"I have unfinished business in boxing," Ibeabuchi told me, his quiet voice never wavering. "It's more a case of why shouldn't I come back, rather than why I should. My strength is that I have not been defeated. So let's fight and let's see if any heavyweights can prove or disprove my ability. Most people might think I should have retired by now, but I haven't been a world champion. To me that is an insult, so I have to redeem myself. I want to be a world champion before day turns to dusk."

Amid this optimistic defiance, however, one question got a somewhat different reaction.

"How does it feel to be free, Mr. Ibeabuchi?" I asked.

"I don't know if I am free yet," he said. "I won't feel free until I step into the ring."

★★★

Most people who worked in boxing in the 1990s have an Ike Ibeabuchi story. And each one is more unbelievable than the next. One night, Ibeabuchi was having lunch in New York with his promoter, Cedric Kushner, and HBO executive Lou DiBella. What happened next was both bizarre and unsettling. "I can deal with anybody and I don't get scared easily," DiBella recalled. "I've seen everything in thirty years of boxing, but I never saw anyone plunge a steak knife into a table in front of me before Ike Ibeabuchi did."

DiBella continued: "We hadn't even got into serious conversation. It was just chitchat, pleasantries. I asked him: 'Where do you live, Ike?' He looked at me and said: 'Why do you want to know where I live? Why are people concerned with where I live? Is someone looking for me? Why do you want to know where I live?' And after that little expression of dismay, he plunged the fucking steak knife into the table."

Recalling the incident a year or two later, Kushner admitted that his fighter's behavior "wasn't the type of conduct I expected to romance the guy from HBO."

More than two decades later, Ibeabuchi remains an enigma. Many who knew him insist he was mentally ill to the extent that he was a danger to himself and to others. Eric Bottjer, former matchmaker for Kushner, insisted: "I've been around boxing a long time, long enough to realize that it's not a normal profession and a lot of boxers are not normal human beings, but Ike is the only fighter I've ever met who I would say was literally insane."

The legal wreckage Ibeabuchi caused from 1997 onward – including allegations, charges, or convictions connected to sexual assault, kidnapping and attempted murder – make for grim reading, especially when you consider the human cost of his deeds, which include a teenage boy left permanently damaged and unable to walk properly as well as several prostitutes who lost their minds.

"I recall having a conversation with Cedric where I said I thought Ike was a dangerous human being who was capable of killing somebody," Bottjer recalled. "Not that he had made any threats to me or anybody on our staff, but, being around him, that was the impression I formed. Thankfully he never did [murder anyone], but having said that, he certainly did harm to that boy in Texas and the woman in Las Vegas."

There's another narrative, however, advanced by Ike himself and his late mother, Patricia – a tale of conspiracy in which mysterious men stole embryos to breed a future world heavyweight champion. It's the type of story you might find in the pages of a pulp novel, one in which Ibeabuchi is the victim, a man immersed in the corrupt world of boxing who encounters exploitation at every turn. There are also those who firmly deny Ibeabuchi is the crazed monster he has often been portrayed as. "Ike was a good man with a good heart," insists Bill Benton, the trainer and matchmaker who was arguably closer to him than anyone else in the boxing business. "Forget boxing, he did beautiful and good things that people never talk about."

Putting aside for now Ibeabuchi's mental health, we must first look at what can't be questioned, the facts of his boxing career – facts that have helped him reach mythical status in heavyweight boxing history. His record – 20-0 with 15 knockouts – isn't necessarily impressive. In modern boxing, any mediocre heavyweight who is guided carefully can build such a record. What created Ibeabuchi's status as one of boxing's great "what if" stories were two defining fights – the ones he fought against David Tua in 1997 and Chris Byrd in 1999.

The strength of these two performances – as well as images of Ibeabuchi exchanging bombs with Tua and knocking out Byrd – conjure what might have happened had he battled the likes of Lennox Lewis, Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson.

Boxing fans love to debate what could have been, particularly when it comes to wasted or unfulfilled talent. Ike, however, doesn't give a fuck: "The Holyfield fight did not happen, nor Lewis or Tyson," he declared. "Commenting on them would be crying over spilled milk."

RIVAL
RIVAL
BRIDGES

BUILDING BRIDGES

SOCIAL MEDIA ATTENTION, A DESIRE TO SHATTER STEREOTYPES AND A WILLINGNESS TO GO IN TOUGH HAVE TAKEN EBANIE "BLONDE BOMBER" BRIDGES A LONG WAY IN A SHORT TIME, BUT HER STARDOM MAY STILL BE JUST A FRACTION OF ITS POTENTIAL

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

Ebanie Bridges just wants to go home.

It's August 25, the Aussie bantamweight has been in the United Kingdom for six months, and though the news is better about COVID-19 restrictions lifting enough for her to go back to New South Wales, there is still one more fight on September 4 in Leeds before she can get on a plane.

"I think I'm at a point now where I need to go home and enjoy my family and my boyfriend and all that kind of stuff," she said.

Bridges won the eight-round decision but injured her right hand in a tougher-than-expected scrap with Mailys Gangloff. It was the fourth fight of 2021 for the "Blonde Bomber," who is fighting the schedule of an up-and-comer now eight bouts into her pro career, but this is no ordinary prospect.

Instead, the 35-year-old has already fought for a world title, blown up social media more than a few times due to her looks and always-memorable trips to the scale on weigh-in day, and has been compared to Muhammad Ali by none other than respected British journalist (and Ring columnist) Gareth A Davies.

That last bit REALLY blew up social media.

"Had he just left the Muhammad Ali part out and said everything else that

BETFRED
BETFRED
matchroom
GOODWIN
BETFRED
BETFRED
BETFRED
JDSPORTS.COM
JDSPORTS.COM
StubHub
matchroom.
BETFRED
BETFRED

he said, everyone would have agreed with him, because he's very right," said Bridges. "But because he compared me to Muhammad Ali – you can't compare anyone to Muhammad Ali. I don't care who you are. But I took it as a compliment and saw it for what it was, the point of being outspoken and doing my thing and that having an effect [on women's boxing]. Look, it got people talking, good or bad. No matter what happens, somehow my name gets brought up and I think that's brilliant."

Not bad for someone with less than 10 pro fights, but what critics have missed is that Davies was spot on when he said Bridges could change women's boxing the way Ali changed the entire sport. Yet while she's appreciative of such praise, changing women's boxing isn't enough for Bridges.

"I just love that I'm able to be different and break a stereotype," she said. "Obviously I love punching and fighting, but it's become more of a mission to keep proving that, hey, you know what, pretty girls can fight. I got dismissed because of my looks, and I just want to show that you don't judge a book by its cover. And I think the more that I keep getting in there and proving myself and improving, that helps the generations coming up and the other women out there in all industries where we get judged for our femininity and dismissed because of our femininity. What I stand for is: Be real, be you, and I'll never change who I am."

What Bridges did have to change was her postal code, at least temporarily. Juggling a full-time job as a math teacher with a pro career that began in 2019 after a short, 30-fight amateur run, Bridges won her first five bouts in the punch-for-pay ranks before getting the opportunity of a lifetime in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic: a short-notice call to travel to England to face Shannon Courtenay for the vacant WBA bantamweight title in April 2021.

The pre-fight focus was on Bridges' looks, her charisma, but not what she could do in the ring. It only took 10 rounds to change that, as the Aussie went punch-for-punch with Courtenay, doing it down the stretch with a left eye that was swollen shut. Bridges lost the unanimous decision, but many observers, including former titleholder Shawn Porter, believed she won. Yet no matter how fans judged the fight, what was unanimous was the reality that Bridges wasn't a media creation, but a real fighter. Raw, but real.

Bridges made her pro debut against Mahiecka Pareno in 2019.

Two wins have followed under the banner of Eddie Hearn's Matchroom Boxing, and in the U.K., Bridges' star has risen to impressive levels.

"In the U.K., I walk down the street, I get stopped. I get people running after me while I'm running to stop for photos," she said. "Anywhere I go, I get photos taken of me in the U.K. It's not really at that level in America yet, and I definitely don't see it happening in Australia. Boxing's not big enough [in Australia] ... So it's pretty surreal over here in the U.K., but I won't be living in the U.K. I'll be here for camps at the most, because I do have a partner at home, and unfortunately living over here is not an option for me."

Outside of the 26-hour flight home from the U.K., it's almost a perfect scenario for Bridges because she can be the "Blonde Bomber" on the road and Ebanie at home. If she has her way, she'll even remain Miss Bridges by teaching her students about math, boxing and life.

"I love teaching," she said. "I'm very passionate about it; I love being in that classroom and I miss my students a lot. However, while I'm traveling, obviously, I'm unable to teach. But while I'm in Australia, I'm quite happy to do it on a casual basis or a part-time basis where I can balance both, to a degree. I run boxing programs there that help a lot of the kids and a lot of the girls, and that's really important for me to give back to the community and give back to the students with more than just teaching math."

When you hear Bridges talking about teaching, the dedication she has for it is clear. But what is also clear is that she is aware her days in the classroom may be numbered because of the way her boxing career is going. And for now, she'll deal with that disappointment, knowing that this is the time to strike while the iron is hot and make her move in the ring, where she's reached a point of no turning back.

"As we say in Australia, I'm not here to fuck spiders, mate," she laughs. "I want to have the good fights, and I don't plan on going backwards and I don't plan on going slowly. I haven't done anything slow. I've got where I have in 18 months. It just shows I'm not here for a slow ride. I'm 35. I want to have good fights and fun fights and fights for the fans and get a world title. I have absolutely no desire to go backwards."

WORLD BEAT

U.K.

BY GARETH A DAVIES

SOME RAYS OF LIGHT APPEAR

British boxing fans finally had an occasion to cheer about, with the first stadium event since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. On the first weekend of September at Headingley Rugby League Stadium in Leeds, 20,000 spectators returned in an air of triumphalism in support of local fighter Josh Warrington's rematch with Mauricio Lara. Warrington had vacated his featherweight title but suffered a first career defeat behind closed doors in February at the hands of nemesis Lara, but sadly this second contest was cut short in the second round after a gash to the Mexican's left eye from an accidental head clash, the encounter over before it started. The technical draw was a huge disappointment for both fighters after a thrilling start, with the partisan crowd delirious at every exchange. Warrington – "absolutely gutted" – explained: "I am confused. I don't know what to say. I honestly felt I could burst into tears when the ref waved it off."

It would make sense for Warrington, who has a huge fan base, to move on to new pastures before meeting Lara at a future date.

But it was still a night – promoted by Eddie Hearn on the DAZN digital platform – that other boxers shone. Notably, Conor Benn and Katie Taylor. Taylor put in another

A clash of heads led to a premature ending in the Lara-Warrington rematch in Leeds, England.

dominant performance to claim a decisive victory on the three judges' scorecards (100-89) after flooring Jennifer Han with a short right hook in the eighth round. "I want the megafights and to be involved in the biggest fights out there," Taylor said. "I'm confident I will end my career as an unbeaten and undisputed world champion." Hearn should move heaven and earth to make those megafights a reality.

Rising star Benn, meanwhile, was visibly frustrated in his 10-round bout against a smart, elusive Adrian Granados, but the son of British boxing legend Nigel Benn insisted that big nights now lie ahead. Benn, indeed, has already become one of the most popular young fighters – 25 years old and with a resume of 19-0, with 12 knockouts – on these shores. He talks the talk, has a compelling aura around him and is tenacious and ambitious. On display every time he steps into the ring is the welterweight's clear "Benn DNA." Refusing to take a backward step after a clear points victory over elite journeyman Granados, Benn declared: "I'll have Adrien Broner next. I'll have Broner here at the O2 Arena, I'll have him at a stadium out in America – it doesn't bother me at all."

Benn, speaking to me on talkSport's Fight Night show immediately after his victory, added: "Broner is definitely an opponent I'd love to fight and share the ring with this year. He's a four-time world champion, and I won't shy away from anybody. If he wants it, I'll give it to him. That's not a problem." Benn was taken aback by the support from the raucous Headingley crowd following the triumph. "Twenty thousand shouting my name, it was absolutely incredible," he said. "I've never had a welcome like it, and it lived up to what they say about the Leeds supporters. I don't know what I've ever done to deserve a welcome like that. It was absolutely incredible."

Time will tell on Benn, but he is certainly a draw, and in mid-September he signed a multi-fight deal with Hearn. "You can't predict nothing in boxing. If I bang them out in the first round, the big fights are going to come 'round a lot sooner. It's just a matter of how my career goes. You just don't know. We're still testing the waters. I believe I can go all the way."

There is also a deep sense of his self-worth, borne, he says, of the effort and sacrifice he makes under trainer Tony Sims.

"I think fighters forget marketing is just as important as being able to fight. No one else is going to sell yourself as well as you. I don't rely on anyone else. There's a million fighters. Loads of fighters are brand-friendly and have that platform because they market themselves well. Not everyone gets it.

"Listen, you create the hype – you don't believe it. I don't think I can possibly work any harder than I do. I speak with confidence because confidence is a luxury for the hard-working. It's nice and it's flattering to know that. But at the end of the day, I'm still far off from where I need to be."

Elsewhere, Josh Taylor will return on December 18 defending his undisputed/Ring Magazine junior welterweight championship against fellow Brit Jack Catterall as Bob Arum's Top Rank outfit settles into its tenure with Sky Sports. "Once we get past this pandemic, we are expecting to do six to nine events a year in the United Kingdom," promoter Arum told me. "That includes Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland. The idea [with Taylor-Catterall] is we'll show the fight on Sky, do a good gate and send it over to the United States in the afternoon. ESPN is OK with that. Then we'll see what's a big fight, assuming [Taylor] gets by Catterall. There are a lot of candidates. What happens if Teo Lopez wants to go up and fight him? What happens if he wants to fight Terence Crawford? Both are doable."

Speaking to Taylor himself as he entered camp with trainer Ben Davison, he mentioned both of those fights but was also quick to point out that there will be no overlooking Catterall, undefeated in 26 contests with 13 knockouts.

The autumn will also herald the first all-women professional fight league here under newly established Unified Promotions in the U.K., with businesswomen and entrepreneur Susannah Schofield OBE as its promoter, longstanding matchmaker Richard Poxon – who works with Al Haymon and previously with Ricky Hatton – and John Wischhusen, formerly senior boxing coordinator with Matchroom Sport, as an adviser and consultant.

The resonance and growth of women's boxing, notably over the last two years, has not been lost on Schofield, who has cut a swath for women in business – publishing a magazine of the same name – and showing her savvy as the former commercial director at Royal Mail.

Schofield, 45, conveys a fearlessness about the "new world" she is in, insistent that the focus is on making boxing "accessible as a credible sport" and thus a career for women. "We've had some incredible athletes emerge from the Olympics and elite amateurs, but then there's a gulf. It's about creating a gateway for women to thrive in this sport, where the focus is on them." Schofield is aware of the history, moreover, of boxers like Jane Couch forced to go to court to gain a license 23 years ago. "We forget about the battles that women have had, and not really that long ago. Even to get a license to do this, vis-à-vis Jane Couch.

"I've always worked in a male-dominated environment," she added. "From the Royal Mail, which is 90 percent men, to working in football, which is still dominated by men, and now to boxing. I've never felt it's held me back. We are saying to women, 'Come and join us.'"

Gareth A Davies is the boxing writer for the London Telegraph.

JAPAN

BY YURIKO MIYATA

Pound-for-pound-rated Kazuto Ioka defended his WBO 115-pound title for the third time with a competitive unanimous decision against mandatory challenger Francisco Rodriguez Jr. on September 1 at Ota-City General Gymnasium in Tokyo. It was a fan-friendly fight, but it took place in an empty venue due to the government's pandemic state of emergency guidelines, which barred the public from the event.

"It felt like sparring in a big arena, but I don't mean I was not [happy to be] there," Ioka (27-2, 15 KOs) said during an online media conference the next day.

The popular four-division titleholder scored a brilliant eighth-round stoppage of younger three-division titlist Kosei Tanaka on New Year's Eve, but he looked uncomfortable with the Mexican challenger's rhythm during the first half of the bout. Ioka, who took some hard right-hand shots from Rodriguez (34-5-1, 24 KOs) early on, picked up the pace in the later rounds with a hit-and-move strategy that earned him unanimous scores of 116-112 from the three Japanese judges (that Rodriguez, of course, did not agree with).

Ioka admitted that it was not his best performance and showed respect to the challenger, who remained in top shape during a two-week mandatory quarantine after his arrival to Japan.

"I saw Rodriguez's great determination," said Ioka. "He came all the way to take my belt even in this difficult time. It took me a little time to deal with his style. I am not really happy with what I did there."

It's possible that Ioka's focus and preparation for Rodriguez were thrown off by the controversy that followed his victory over Tanaka. However, it should be noted that the infractions that put him at odds with the Japan Boxing Commission (JBC) would not have attracted as much attention outside of Japan.

The first issue were the tattoos on his left arm, which he refused to conceal with a sleeve (as is the custom) during his fight with Tanaka. The JBC prohibits licensed domestic boxers from any appearance deemed "unpleasant to spectators," and that includes tattoos (which are also associated with organized crime in Japan). Some boxers have gone so far as to get skin grafts to remove their tattoos in order to be licensed.

The JBC chose to reprimand, rather than suspend, Ioka, who has publicly complained about the tattoo restriction, calling it an "outdated rule."

NAOKI FUKUDA

Months later, Ioka tested positive for cannabis, which is illegal in Japan. However, he was cleared of charges after it was revealed that the JBC mishandled the lab testing and the storage of his A and B samples. The JBC ended up publicly apologizing to Ioka, but he admits the ordeal was mentally exhausting.

Since returning from a brief retirement, starting with his U.S. debut against McWilliams Arroyo in 2018, Ioka has been looking for bigger fights in the deep 115-pound division where Ring champ Juan Francisco Estrada and fellow four-division champ Roman "Chocolatito" Gonzalez reside. Ioka says he's going after IBF beltholder Jerwin Ancajas next to make a big statement.

WORLD BEAT

★★★

Junto Nakatani made history by becoming the first Japanese boxer to make his first defense of a major world title in the U.S. Nakatani (22-0, 17 KOs) stopped heavy-handed former 108-pound beltholder Angel Acosta (22-3, 21 KOs) 32 seconds into the fourth round due to a badly broken nose suffered by the experienced Puerto Rican challenger.

The WBO flyweight title bout took place on September 10 in Tucson, Arizona (on the undercard of the controversial Oscar Valdez-Robson Conceicao card), and was broadcast live in the U.S. via the ESPN+ platform.

The Acosta bout was announced as the 23-year-old Nakatani's American debut, but technically it was not his first fight in the U.S., as he had three amateur fights in California, including one in the backyard of two-division titleholder Daniel Ponce de Leon's gym in Los Angeles seven years ago.

Nakatani was just 15 when he traveled alone to become a disciple of veteran trainer Rudy Hernandez, and he still stays at the trainer's apartment whenever he travels to camps in Los Angeles.

"It's like my second home," said Nakatani, who won the vacant WBO title with a knockout of Filipino contender Giemel Magramo in November 2020.

Nakatani says he enjoys staying with Hernandez even though his only private space is a bedroom. For this camp, he brought a rice cooker from Japan and fixed small meals of chicken and salad to help make the 112 pounds, but his intense gym work also contributed to making the flyweight division limit.

Ioka (left) was tested early by Francisco Rodriguez Jr. but made adjustments and won on points.

Nakatani (right) was covered in challenger Angel Acosta's blood.

Nakatani estimates he sparred 70 rounds with 16-1 bantamweight prospect Saul Sanchez and flyweight amateur standout Anthony Herrera, who finished second in the 2020 U.S. Olympic Team Trials, at Manny Robles Jr.'s gym in South Gate.

"I believe that quality sparring is the best way to get ready for a fight," Nakatani said. "I've adjusted to American boxing culture, and I've learned from Rudy that there are always solutions to problems in the ring."

Hernandez isn't easily impressed, but he marvels at the dedication Nakatani has had since he was a teenager. He stays in the gym and takes care of his diet and running schedule. Hernandez says his late brother Genaro Hernandez, a former two-time junior lightweight champ, was the most disciplined boxer he'd known until he met Nakatani.

Nakatani utilized his long jab to land left hands that shattered Acosta's nose within the first round, but he also overwhelmed the desperate challenger with inside work. The referee had to halt the fight after carefully checking the Puerto Rican's nose three times.

"I wanted to keep going to knock him down, but it is what it is," Nakatani said in his dressing room after the fight. "I am glad I got this TKO victory anyway. It's a good step to the next level."

Top Rank's Bob Arum watched it all at ringside and told the Japanese media that he was going to talk with Nakatani's promoter, Akihiko Honda, about his next fight.

"[Nakatani] is talented and powerful," Arum said. "If Mr. Honda wants us to give him another fight in the U.S., we are happy to do it."

It seems that the 5-foot-7½-tall (and still growing) southpaw will be back in his second home again soon.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage the South African boxing community, with two more well-known retired fighters succumbing to the virus.

First, former South African and Commonwealth super middleweight champion Andre Thysse passed away at the age of 52.

Thysse, the father of streaking junior middleweight prospect Brandon Thysse, was a well-known figure on the local scene, staying involved in the sport as a promoter and matchmaker after his retirement.

A tall, rangy boxer, he was a dominant national champion, winning the title in 2001 with a ninth-round stoppage over Thabiso Mogale. He made eight successful defenses of the belt before vacating it in 2005. The highlight of his career came in 2003 when he outpointed David Starie over 12 rounds to become Commonwealth champion, a win that kick-started his international career.

He fought extensively on the road, dropping a decision to Markus Beyer in a challenge for the WBC title in 2004. He always gave a good account of himself

Former Commonwealth champ Andre Thysse was highly respected in South African boxing circles.

but could not get over the hump at the world level, which was forgivable. He faced no less than four other men who would go on to become titleholders, including Mikkel Kessler, Juergen Braehmer, Lucian Bute and Sakio Bika. He retired in 2009 with a record of 20-8, including 12 knockouts.

An outspoken man outside the ring with a sharp sense of humor, he will be sorely missed.

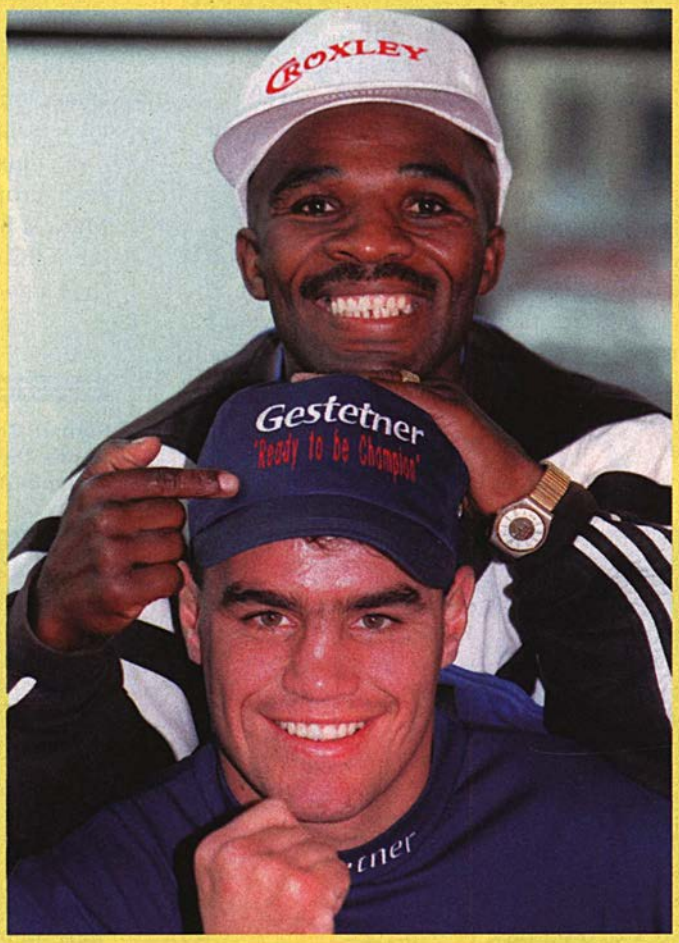
★★★

Next, Olympian and former South African middleweight champion Giovanni Pretorius also succumbed to the virus at the premature age of 49.

Pretorius represented South Africa in the welterweight division at the Barcelona Olympics of 1992, a memory he always cherished. He was eliminated in his first bout but turned pro amid great fanfare and quickly became a popular attraction. A pressure fighter who could punch, he won the national middleweight title by knocking out Simon Maseko in six rounds in 1996.

After cleaning up the local scene and recording several international wins, he jumped up to super middleweight to challenge WBC champion Robin Reid in 1997 on the Naseem Hamed-Tom Johnson card. Reid was just too big, and Pretorius was stopped in seven rounds.

He returned to the middleweight division and racked up six more wins before losing his national title in 1999 to Johnson Tshuma. Pretorius retired after that with a 28-2-1 mark, including 24 knockouts.



1997 photo of South African boxers Jacob Matlala (top) and Giovanni Pretorius in London

Giovanni Pretorius was never in a bad fight. He often brought the crowd to its feet, cheering him on with the popular song "Shosholoza," which would become his nickname. Fight fans will remember him fondly.

★★★

A ray of light appeared when junior featherweight Bongani Mahlangu stopped Tony Rashid in the 12th round in front of his home crowd in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, to become the new African Boxing Union champion.

Mahlangu, a 2004 Olympian, has been an in-and-outer as a pro and at the age of 42 had almost two years' worth of inactivity to shake off.

The fight developed into an intriguing battle between two southpaws with contrasting styles.

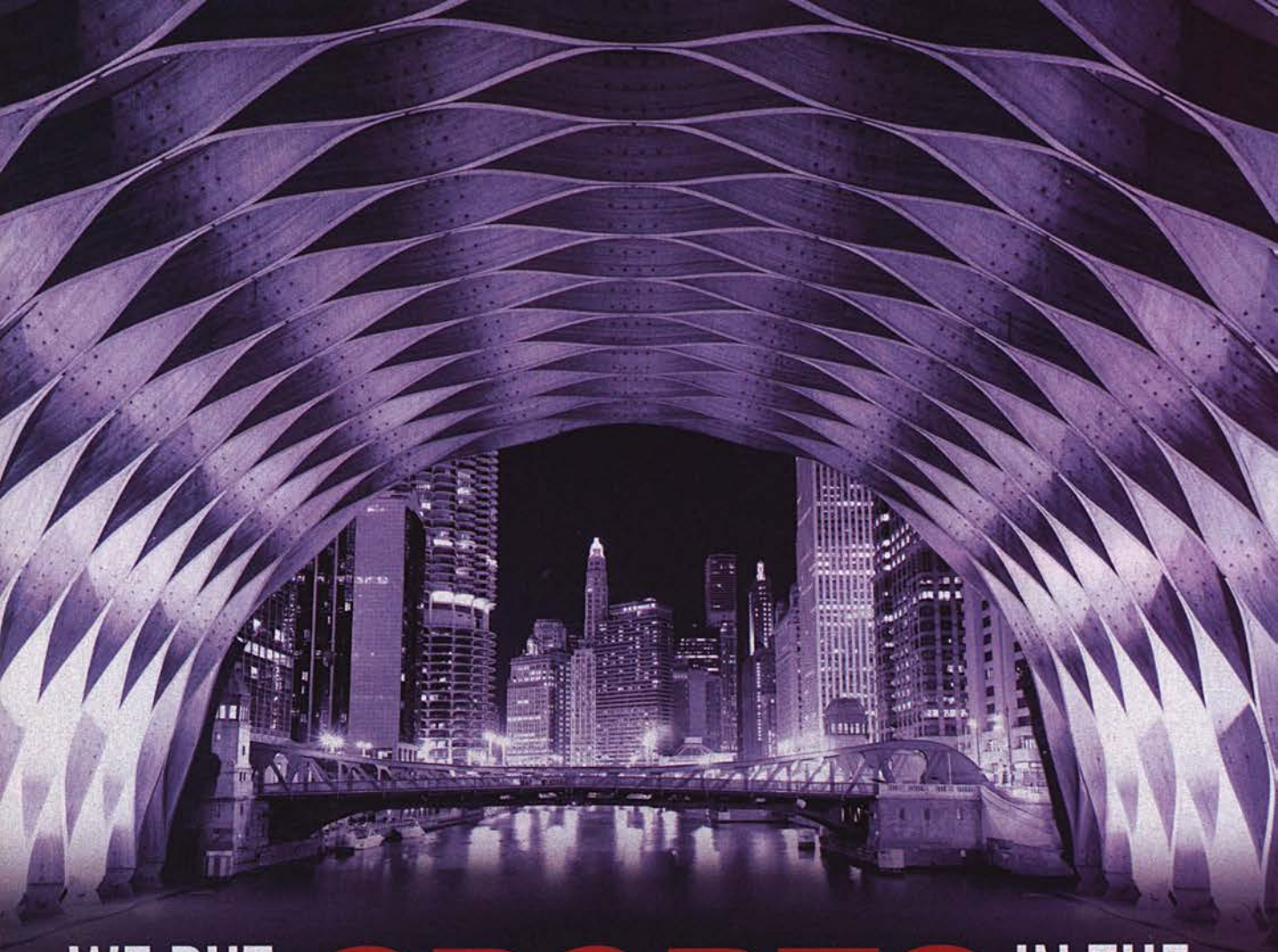
Mahlangu was on his bicycle for most of the fight and had the faster hands and feet, even at his advanced age. He had no trouble landing his jab to the head and body before getting back on his toes.

Rashid kept after him, and even though he hit a lot of air while getting there, he let his hands go whenever he had Mahlangu on the ropes, finding the target with his lead right hook. His success was never long-lived, as Mahlangu either held him or spun out of harm's way.

Rashid was the aggressor and appeared to land the harder blows, but Mahlangu's movement was giving him fits and he kept eating jabs.

With the fight up for grabs going into the last round, the end was sudden and unexpected when Mahlangu stopped his jab-and-move approach and turned puncher. A perfectly timed left nailed Rashid on the jaw and a sweeping right uppercut snapped his head back as he stumbled backward into the corner, the follow-up barrage depositing him face-first on the canvas. He made it back to his feet, but Mahlangu was on him and would not stop punching, forcing the referee to intervene at the 0:51 mark with Rashid trapped in the corner.

Mahlangu extends his record to 23-8 with 11 knockouts while Rashid, who was stopped for the first time, drops to 12-2-2 with nine knockouts.



WE PUT *SPORTS* IN THE *SPOTLIGHT*

BRANDING, CONSULTING, MARKETING, PUBLICITY

GET IN TOUCH

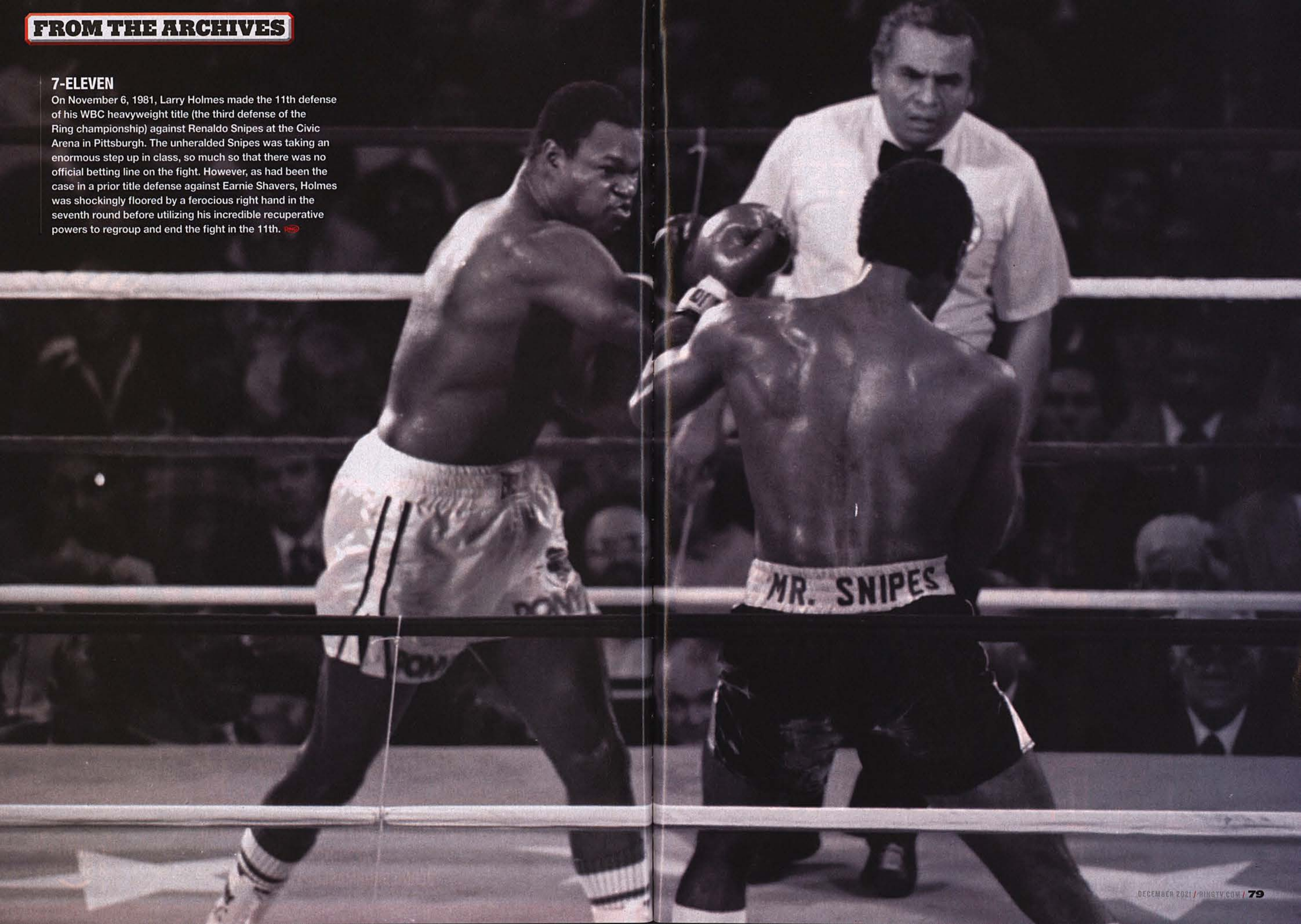
BERNIE BAHRMASEL
DOUBLE B SPORTS

MERCHANDISE MART, SUITE 921, CHICAGO, IL
+1 773 592-2986
BERNIEBAHRMASEL@YAHOO.COM.

DOUBLE B SPORTS

7-ELEVEN

On November 6, 1981, Larry Holmes made the 11th defense of his WBC heavyweight title (the third defense of the Ring championship) against Renaldo Snipes at the Civic Arena in Pittsburgh. The unheralded Snipes was taking an enormous step up in class, so much so that there was no official betting line on the fight. However, as had been the case in a prior title defense against Earnie Shavers, Holmes was shockingly floored by a ferocious right hand in the seventh round before utilizing his incredible recuperative powers to regroup and end the fight in the 11th.



NOW AVAILABLE
NOW A

World
Best
Japanese
Made
Boxing
Equipment

811 N. CATALINA AVE.
3002 REDONDO BEACH
CA 90277 USA

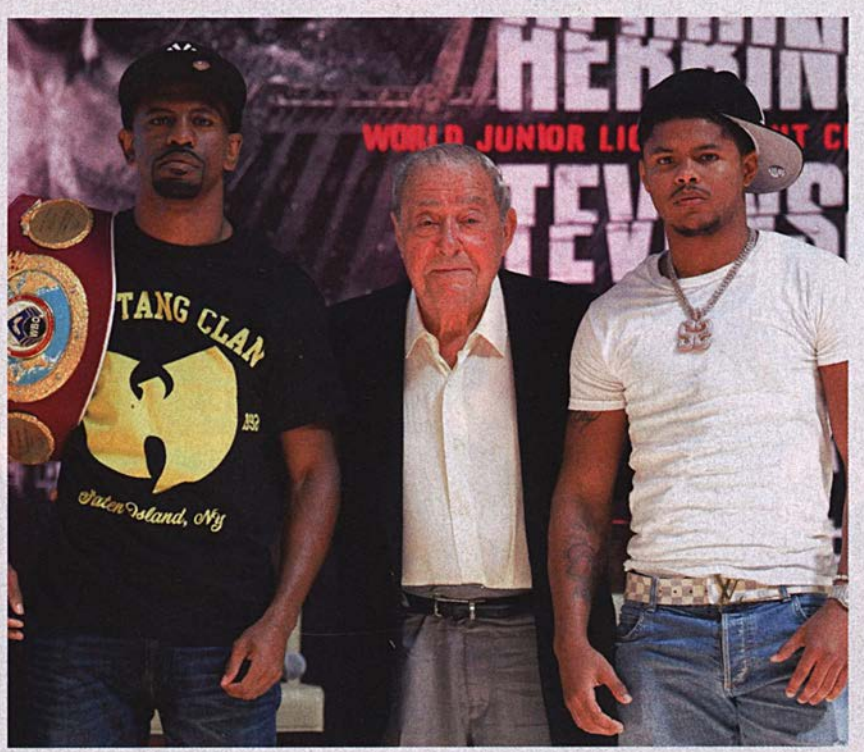
Phone:
310-376-9490
Fax:
310-540-6723
E-mail:
BOXING@
WINNING-USA.COM

Web:
WINNING-USA.COM
WINNING-JAPAN.COM

W.B.C.
certified

Winning
FIGHTING SPORTS WORLD

COMING UP



Jamel Herring makes the fourth defense of his WBO title against Shakur Stevenson.

OCTOBER

OCT. 15 – Emanuel Navarrete vs. Joet Gonzalez, featherweights (for Navarrete's WBO title), San Diego (ESPN+).

OCT. 16 – Mikey Garcia vs. Sandor Martin, junior welterweights, Fresno, California (DAZN). Also, Elwin Soto vs. Jonathan Gonzalez, junior flyweights (for Soto's WBO title); Jesse Rodriguez vs. Esteban Bermudez, junior flyweights.

OCT. 23 – Jamel Herring vs. Shakur Stevenson, junior lightweights (for Herring's WBO title), Atlanta (ESPN/ESPN+).

OCT. 30 – Dillian Whyte vs. Otto Wallin, heavyweights, London (DAZN). Also, Chantelle Cameron vs. Mary McGee, junior welterweights (for vacant Ring, Cameron's WBC and McGee's IBF titles).

NOVEMBER

NOV. 6 – Canelo Alvarez vs. Caleb Plant, super middleweights (for Alvarez's Ring/WBA/WBC/WBO and Plant's IBF titles), Las Vegas (Showtime PPV).

NOV. 13 – David Benavidez vs. Jose Uzcategui, super middleweights, Phoenix (Showtime).

NOV. 13 – Dina Thorslund vs. Zulina Munoz, bantamweights (for Thorslund's WBO title), Kolding, Denmark.

NOV. 20 – Terence Crawford vs. Shawn Porter, welterweights (for Crawford's WBO title), Las Vegas (ESPN+ PPV).

NOV. 27 – Brandon Figueroa vs. Stephen Fulton, junior featherweights (for Figueroa's WBC title and Fulton's WBO title), Las Vegas (Showtime).

DECEMBER

DEC. 18 – Josh Taylor vs. Jack Catterall, junior welterweights (for Taylor's Ring/IBF/WBA/WBC/WBO titles), Glasgow, Scotland (ESPN/Sky).

DEC. 18 – Joseph Parker vs. Derek Chisora, heavyweights, Manchester (DAZN).

Cleto Reyes USA

Boxing Equipment

FREE SHIPPING

USE THIS COUPON: THERING

ONLY AT CLETOREYESBOXING.COM

IF YOU NEED EQUIPMENT, YOU NEED CLETO REYES (833) REYES US / (833) 73937 87

WWW.KOTICKETS.COM

KO TICKETS

Established 1999

LAS VEGAS OFFICE:
(800)283-8699

JIM BOONE CELL:
(702)591-1638

KO TICKETS

Proudly giving access to the best seats in Boxing and Entertainment. Since 1999.

@KOTickets

Painting by SloneArt.com